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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND FROM A NEW POINT OF VIEW.

PART I.

BY

FRANK SHERBORNE.

LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
1866.

Price One Shilling.

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PART I.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE LIVED to see the Church neglected by statesmen; its influence on national character and happiness disparaged; its ministry deserted by the ablest of my countrymen; its hopes centred in a Convocation without power and ecclesiastical officers without authority; its members wasting their energies on petty quarrels, and its leaders resting their defence upon vested interests and prescriptive rights.

I look back upon the past and note how the great Reform Bill struck the wealthy clergy—pluralists and great pensionaries—to the ground, and divided their wealth amongst the poor brethren. I look into the future and descry another Reform Bill, destined to deal a similar blow at our present

ecclesiastical arrangements. May the Ecclesiastical Commission of the future be wiser than the Commission of the past!

I have asked myself why with so noble a mission the Church of Christ is so weakly supported and so lightly regarded; why the signs of debility should now show themselves. Such answer as I have been able to make will be found in the following pages.

F. SHERBORNE.

March 28, 1866.

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THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH.

When I hear of the progress of Church warfare, the speeches of clerical champions, and the thrilling deeds of valour, perseverance, and endurance chronicled in the newspapers, I am apt to fancy myself in feudal times, when bishop fought right gallantly with bishop, and led a host of obscure retainers to the battle and the siege. Bishops, deans, and archdeacons cease to be quiet gentlemen, fond of public meetings, and take the likeness of barons and knights caracoling proudly upon their palfreys ready for combat; the newspaper editors grow into the aspect of heralds, all the more valiant as they are not actual combatants. The rectors and vicars are accommodated in my imagination

to knights, while the rout of men-at-arms, who, in ancient and well-conducted warfare, were never of much account, are fairly presented by the curates. The great councils which advised the Norman princes, or the parliament of notables that registered obsequiously the edicts of the early French kings, favour marvellously the honourable House of Convocation; and when I observe the free and independent bearing of these episcopal paladins, how readily they will encounter Paynim or Christian (usually preferring Christian), with what versatility they ally with the foe of yesterday, and fight to-morrow against the friend of to-day, my imagination is fairly conquered. I am in the War of the Roses, or among the crusaders. I perceive much clash of armour, but little loss of blood or life, as is the wont of such noble warfare. The warriors are too well armed and panoplied to suffer scathe, except here and there a curate, who, like the man-at-arms, is sure to suffer in the mêlée. The fight is for honour and not for gain. My lord baron summons his retainers, who flock readily to his standard. As there are always a considerable number of

persons who feel they have a call to do something, without having precisely discovered what it is, his summons meets with a general response. Whether war is declared against Rome, Geneva, or heathen darkness, there are rectors and vicars, whose lives are usually spent at home amongst beeves, and whose thoughts are for the most part on the price of corn, ready to adventure themselves. It is the fate of such combatants, after being successful in the assault, to quarrel over their conquest. In the hour of victory, and still more in defeat, the league is broken, and new alliances are formed. Every victory is a signal for new combinations, and an opening for new leaders. Nothing but the oath of allegiance holds the retainer to his lord. Modern science and strict discipline have not given to ecclesiastical contests solidity of masses and combination of action.

It may be a dream with which my imagination cheats me. It has something of truth in it if it is a dream. The Church of England, with its courts, its officers, and its laws, preserves essentially its feudal aspect. The control which a secretary of state exercises over his

department, the power of a modern general over his army, is effective and searching. Modern law has conferred on modern service the requisite organisation and a due subordination of power. The soldier obeys, not because he has sworn to obey, but because he is punished for disobedience. His duties are defined; his neglect of them is promptly punished. Feudalism has passed away from the service of the world, and remains now to hamper the cause of the Church. The ecclesiastical service has the benefit of no modern system. The oath of allegiance remains now, as in the beginning, the only substantial check upon the eccentricity of the clergy. Bishop and rector are kept in their place, not by fear of certain punishment, but by a reverence for the oath of allegiance, the obligation of which every man interprets for himself. There are indeed gross and exceptional cases, where modern law has been compelled to interfere for the suppression of monstrous evils, but the general conduct of clerical work is still regulated by a feudal oath of allegiance. The incumbent who chooses to stand on his rights may set his parishioners

and the bishop at defiance. I know a parish in an ably administered diocese, where, during thirty years, the rector has outraged the moral feelings of his neighbours, and foiled the attempts of the bishop to remove him. He remains there now.

The feudal powers of bishops have been destroyed by modern legislation. The dungeon in the episcopal palace at Fulham is used as a coal-cellar. The liberties of the clergy are in consequence increased. The oath of clerical obedience is the only real tie which binds the priest, and that oath he may evade when he chooses. Without changing the character of the ecclesiastical system, modern legislation has effected two things—it has effectually destroyed the power of the governing body: it has relieved the governed of real restraint.

It is a curious study to trace the causes which withheld the statesman who had destroyed one system of government from building up another on the ruins of it. No party in the state has even thought it worth while to remodel and strengthen the ecclesiastical system. From the time when Laud fell with the Church in an

attempt to revive its feudal powers, the Church has been studiously weakened. The Stuarts, after the rebellion, were too cautious to undertake the task which had cost Charles I. his head. William III. and the two first Georges, aware that the clergy were for the most part Jacobites, and that the Dissenters were the staunchest supporters of the new dynasty, left the Church to work out its own disgrace in multiplied pluralities and unpunishable immorality. The brief sunshine of Queen Anne's favour passed away and left the gloom still darker. When the Evangelical Reformers appeared, the Church had become the property of so many vested interests, had sanctioned so many abuses, that the reforms necessary to engraft the efficiency of a modern system on a feudal organisation, involved a revolution. Avoiding this extreme, the reformers confined their efforts to the improvement of the personal character of the clergy, and the suppression of evils which were not vitally connected with the whole ecclesiastical system. They poured new wine into old bottles. The high Church reaction followed in the same groove. They too poured the new

wine of a revived dogmatism into old bottles, till the old system under the double pressure can now hardly bear the strain with which it is distended.

The grand old system, with all its cumbrous machinery, sometimes more cumbrous by reason of ingenious legal innovations, with all its abuses, no constitutional party or government has ever dared to attack. Whigs and Tories are agreed on this point; they would as readily think of rectifying the Tower of Pisa. Who can guess the consequences even of suppressing the Court of Arches, or removing one mysterious official out of the dim recesses of Doctors' Commons? Everyone knows that the whole fabric might come down if you pulled out the wrong stone. So the evils of abused patronage, of simony, of caprice in the conduct of public worship, of something worse than caprice in the conduct of clerical life, remain untouched, because the reform of these evils involves a complete reform of the whole Church system. We have queer old men sitting in dusty courts administering a feudal law upon the most ancient principles; we have bishops' courts with which

the bishop has as little to do as you or I, except that if he prosecutes a wicked parson he must pay for the luxury; we have churchwardens who are liable for the repair of churches for which they cannot levy Church-rates; we have curates to supply the voids in parishes from which the deans and chapters have carried off the tithes; we have all these relics of past times sheltered under the cover of feudal law, because every reformer who undertakes the subject of the Church reformation knows that reform now means complete reorganisation.

My imagination prances off again from this spectacle of a mediæval Church, hampered or helped by a few clever legal additions, to a new state of things, where a bishop is a bishop indeed, where he is responsible to the government for the administration of his diocese, where he may punish an offender without punishing himself, where through a regular scale of preferment a pious and laborious clergyman may find rest for his body as well as for his soul, as a reward for the labours of his life. The incessant and bewildering strife of men and theories, and of men making profit or reputation out of

theories, yields, in my imagination, before a new order of things, in which the ecclesiastical service shall be thoroughly remodelled, and the work of Christ carried out upon system. I see the books of those feudal lawyers burning in the market-place, and the lawyers themselves walking away like lean and slippered pantaloons to comfort their families with retiring allowances. The reign of peace commences with the return of order and system. The power of piety is set up when the Church begins to honour it. Imagine the officers of the Church invested with legal powers for the effectual performance of their duties. Imagine bishops no longer obliged to employ legal artifices and astute lawyers to punish offenders. Imagine every member of the Church defended by the law in his rights and assisted by law in his duties. Imagine every servant of the Church receiving the sword of office without having the edge first blunted. Imagine virtue and labour rewarded and idleness and vice degraded. Imagine all this if you can. My fervid imagination, even in its enthusiastic moments, is unequal to the task. Yet there was a time when such things were

possible. Great opportunities of good have passed away. What if Parliament in seizing the goods of cathedral chapters, had converted the cathedral to some useful and distinctive purpose? Lord Harrowby and the cathedral commissioners might well be puzzled to say for what object three or four gentlemen and a score of singers are maintained at a great expense to perform daily service in the cathedral choir. It is a puzzle to know what is now the use of a cathedral. It was even more difficult thirty years ago, when, hurried on by the excited cries of poor incumbents, and encouraged by the applause of political reformers, the Parliament withdrew from the chapters the estates which supplied the comforts of life to the clerical circle in the cathedral close. At least there was this advantage from the confiscation of chapter lands, that a body of poor incumbents obtained a larger stipend, and the maintenance of the cathedral service was effected at smaller cost. But what if Parliament had applied the revenues of the chapters to the support of diocesan institutions, had formed in each diocese a body of young clergymen, under the direction of the

bishop, and had put an end to the existence of unattached and unbeneficed clergy? Instead of those ambiguous institutions known by the name of Theological Colleges, where cheap clergymen are manufactured out of nondescript materials, there would have been a central institution attached to the cathedral church intended for the distinct purpose of supplying, at the option of the bishop, the necessities of incumbents in times of sickness or absence. The head-quarters of the unbeneficed clergy would have been the cathedral town till a vacancy occurred by the death or departure of an incumbent in the diocese. The curate system which grew out of corporate abuses, non-residence, and pluralities—a system which has ever been a scandal and difficulty in the Church of England—might have come to an end. The incumbents would have obtained curates free of expense, the curates would have been assured the certainty of maintenance in the Church, the bishops would have been put in possession of a body of men through whom the wants and wishes of every parish might have reached the episcopal ear. The Church might once again,

without violent change, have been reorganised. It is of little avail now to regret the loss of that signal opportunity for good. The Ecclesiastical Commission acted as if they were enclosing a common. The freeholders received their share; the tenants at will, and those who drew a precarious living from it, lost their all. It is but a poor satisfaction to know that the commission has conferred some small good upon poor incumbents, when one reflects what good it might have done to the whole Church. It has increased the value of livings in public patronage: it has increased the value of private patronage which may be sold by the patron. It has made many poor incumbents less poor, and has sent away many rich patrons rejoicing at the thought that public commissioners are willing to double the value of private ecclesiastical property, and that patrons can now sell for a handsome sum a benefice which no one thought before worth buying.

Such has been the commencement of Church reform. Such a spectacle soon dispels my dream of a bishop throned in his cathedral with the theological college of his diocese around

him, receiving daily letters from the clergy of his diocese in need of the help of a curate for a month or a year, giving audience to the curates returned from the discharge of duties, superintending the studies and ob erving the tone and temper of the candidates for holy orders or preferment. Church reformers have killed the goose that might have laid these golden eggs.

The Ecclesiastical Commission have a different policy. They have made up their minds that the Church is to be benefited by small additions to the incomes of poor incumbents. They have a long task before them. The church-endowers are being beaten by the church-builders. District churches are rising up in every populous town, and every remote hamlet, to balance the effects of the commission. It is an exciting and laughable rivalry. Whether the endowers will catch up the builders, or the builders weary out the endowers, is a point upon which I forbear expressing an opinion. I content myself with fixing precisely the policy of the Ecclesiastical Commission and the sphere within which it has voluntarily confined its labours.

CHAPTER II.

OF PEOPLE WHO ARE EXPECTED TO DO SOMETHING AND CANNOT DO IT.

I HAVE always felt especial pity for the man whose title, dress, or rank, excites expectations which cannot possibly be gratified. I cannot help regarding such braveries as so many arguments both to their possessor and to his detractors that he must maintain by special services the claims to public respect with which they invest him. If the law which created his uniform and title carries away the active power of which they were once the symbols, how can he fail to be either ridiculous or unhappy, or both? The public despise him as a sluggard if he displays no energy in realising its conception of his character; it denounces his arrogance if in asserting his dignity he lays hands, by indirect means, on the power which once belonged to him.

For this reason I commiserate ecclesiastical

officers. They have titles; they occupy a distinguished position; they are the objects of lively public expectations, but they have no direct power,—power, I mean, which proceeds with the aid of the law to the accomplishment of the purposes of their office. The higher the office, the greater is the disproportion between what the officers ought to do and their power of doing it. From the bishop to the rural dean descends a scale of official rank of which it may be said that, in point of effective governing power, the bishop is the weakest member. Partly by legal restrictions, partly through want of adequate wealth for the prosecution of offenders, and partly through the embarrassments arising out of such ingenious measures as the Church Discipline Act, which seems all but purposely constructed for the protection of evildoers, the officers of the Church govern only in theory. Their power is limited, except in extreme cases, to the distribution of gratuitous advice.

No one with a title of distinction will be content to consort on an equal footing with the untitled. If you call a man a lord, and tell him

that he is the head of a diocese, and that the country expects something of one in so exalted a position, you drive him to the acquisition, by indirect means, of the power which directly he cannot command. Here lies the canker of the Church. Observe how its influence corrupts the whole system. The bishop who must govern, but cannot govern by law, attempts to govern by social influence. He places his chaplains in all positions of distinction and power, because he knows he can rely upon their support. He cannot afford to throw away patronage in rewarding mere merit. He is obliged to court the powerful, since through their voluntary support alone he can hope to control his diocese. He has no time to spare for the relief of the helpless. He courts popularity, that public opinion may support him. He dares not brave the indignation or provoke the antipathy of his clergy. The world denounces the meanness of such a policy without reflecting that a rigidly honest bishop, careless of such management, would set his diocese on fire in a week without effecting the slightest good as a set-off against such a calamity.

The archdeacon—once an officer of extensive and effective authority—has still a court of his own recognised by the common law. At his visitation he summons the clergy and churchwardens of the archdeaconry to hear a charge of two hours' duration, and dines with them in the afternoon on coarse beef and bad wine at a country inn. He may even annoy an absent rector by citing him and administering a reprimand. Decaying organisations, it may be observed by the way, retain the power of annoyance long after the power of injury is extinct. A visitation presents a scene of some pomp. Yet as rector and churchwardens drive homewards in the dog-cart, conversing comfortably on many matters, is it strange that in the recesses of their heart there lurks a deep incredulity as to the value of the high and mighty phrases with which the archdeacon usually describes his office and authority?

An archdeacon is on a grand scale what a rural dean is on a small scale. The rural dean summons the clergy of the deanery to a 'chapter,' without having the power to resent their absence. Both have official names without effective official power. Both are expected to be

something, while the law condemns them to be, except by indirect means, nothing.

The nation ridicules and upbraids these assertions of power. Would it not still more bitterly denounce the clergy if, accepting the truth, they contented themselves with accepting their salaries and limiting their energies to the perfunctory execution of their strictly legal duties? Their assertion of dignity is a natural consequence of their position. Public opinion, their own conscience, the traditions of the Church, the exigencies of the times, all concur in urging them to employ all available means to strengthen their position.

Look at the ancient assembly of the clergy. What real power has this clerical parliament or its members? The clergy no longer tax themselves in convocation, as they did of yore. The effective law of the Church is decided by Parliament or the lawyers. What power has Convocation out of and beyond that possessed by a voluntary convention of bishops and clergy? Convocation has, of course, high pretensions. It was something once. If it continue to assemble, the nation will expect it to be something

again. The requirements of public opinion will drive it along the dangerous course of raising antiquated claims, and reviving its mediæval procedure. If it would escape ridicule and contempt, it must show its ability to punish and reward, to prohibit and command. Repressed by Parliament, snubbed by ministers, and elbowed out of the way by the Privy Council, it must persist in the hopeless endeavour to be an effective government of the Church. The consciousness of its past glories and present claims impel it to action. It continues the struggle undeterred by overwhelming difficulties. Its success can be secured only at the expense of two very powerful bodies—the Parliament and the lawyers. Who can doubt what will be the end of the efforts of Convocation to extend its jurisdiction at the expense of such dangerous and cautious antagonists?

Bishops, deans, archdeacons, rural deans, and members of Convocation, cannot escape the self-asserting importance which their enemies call priestcraft, and their friends Churchmanship. They are driven to it by the necessities of their position, and by their lack of legal power to

execute their office. They are rather to be pitied than blamed. They suffer as much from the uncomfortable insecurity of their office as those whom they harass by unauthorised advice are afflicted by their gratuitous attempts at government.

I never could see the wisdom of modern reformers in reviving ancient but empty titles, nor how the Church can be strengthened by the creation of ornamental officers. I am rather of opinion that very great and disastrous mischief has been caused by it. The clergy who out of a sense of honour are ready to render a willing obedience, will not be reluctant to prove that they can refuse obedience if they choose. When those who govern are without real authority, those who should obey may render obedience because it is their pleasure, but will be very likely to refuse it if it is exacted as a due. I am convinced that the attempt to execute ecclesiastical offices with the ancient vigour they once had by law has done more than anything else to sow distrust and jealousy amongst the clergy, to create a spirit of disobedience on one side, and of annoyance on the other.

The Church of England resembles a little German state. There are many titled officials, many nobles, a grand system of graduated rank. There are the descendants of nobles—who were of yore paladins of real authority. The times are changed, and the ancient vigour and authority of titled mortality have departed. The real motive powers in the government of the state rest in the hands of a few quiet but clever men, whose influence is not indicated by high titles. The counts and dukes play at the game of ruling, while the effective command is exercised by a bureau of civil servants and lawyers.

The peculiar tortuousness of ecclesiastical policy is thus clearly ascribable to the necessities of the officers of the Church, who are compelled to accomplish their ends by indirect means. The very men who should have been able to punish neglect of duty by the simplest process of law, who should have been laid open to no unnecessary insult or embarrassment in the upright performance of their duty, are fixed in the dilemma either of doing nothing or of doing it by conciliating the gratitude, flattering the vanity, and skilfully manipulating the

antipathies of mankind. The country has been very careful to prevent their doing mischief: would that it had been as careful to assist them in doing good. Would that it had left them the power of administering justice without the sacrifice of principle or the practice of tortuous policy.

You will ask why the official class, to which every facility should be secured for discharging their duties in uprightness and sincerity, is precisely the one from which the legislature has withdrawn it? For a simple reason, I reply. A Church benefice is a valuable property in which two parties are deeply interested—the patron and the incumbent. Neither of them would be benefited by the establishment of a controlling power. If the patron's nominee could be easily removed, the patron's right would be of less value as an article for sale. The incumbent, of course, wishes to be as independent as possible. The patrons and incumbents united, exercise by far the most powerful influence upon the decision of all Church questions. They have succeeded in turning the edge of every effective measure for the improvement of the condition of

the Church. If you ask, then, why the power of government has been diminished, embarrassed, almost destroyed, in the hands of Church officials, I answer, because this is the interest of patrons and incumbents.

Coincident with this collapse of authority has been an increasing tendency to insubordination. The Church is now occupied by a numerous body of clergy who are at once discontented with the present arrangements of the Church, and have the means to follow their own convictions; who are ready to preach the doctrines of Rome or of Geneva; to introduce high ritual or fine singing, or to do nothing at all. The interest of a large body of the clergy now lies in novelty and disturbance. The pleasant excitement of an enthusiastic contest about Church ornaments compensates them for a small pay and a low position. What is the Established Church or its revenues to them? It neither pays them their salaries nor does it develope Catholic dogmas. It may be the interest of country rectors to abide by old usage and time-honoured doctrine, but the perpetual curate, whose church is supported by liberal pew rents, and whose fame is increased

by the introduction of a novel service attractive to wandering Churchmen, is driven in a different direction. He has no large salary to lose. He is rich enough to follow his own tastes. He is fully aware that with the exercise of some judgment he can escape all control. The reformers who were so anxious to fill the ministry with clergy of independent means, were not as clear-sighted with regard to the disadvantages as they were to the advantages of reform. Wealthy clergy who dispense with salary will value all the more the exercise of liberty. Those who serve the Church for nothing will be sure to develope great individuality, and to serve it only in their own way. They have all the faults of volunteers—active and indefatigable labourers while their work lies along the line of their own prepossessions, but independent and uncontrollable when the interests of the ecclesiastical system require the sacrifice of private feeling.

Look now at the consequences of the simultaneous relaxation of the two great bonds of society. The crisis, which the assaults of dissent, the enmity of political parties, the sacrifices necessary in clerical life, could never have

brought about, is now rapidly approaching. A process of disintegration has commenced. Candidates for holy orders are few. A large body of the clergy are restless and dissatisfied. It is impossible that a final disruption can be averted except by the removal of the causes of these evils, and the substitution of a more effective government upon wiser principles. I will now summarise the reforms absolutely essential to the continued existence of the Church of England.

1. Let ecclesiastical officers have the legal power necessary for the prompt execution of their office, or let the office be suppressed.
2. Let every officer be responsible for the use of his power, so that an aggrieved subject may have a ready remedy against the officer who has injured him.
3. Let provision be made for the wants of the clergy out of ecclesiastical funds, so far as may be consistent with justice.*

* I shall return to this subject in a later chapter.

I am fully aware of the gravity of these propositions. I am equally conscious of the reluctance with which the parochial clergy will surrender their freedom to the bishop, and the dislike of the bishop to the control of the state. I will not allow myself to be deterred by these difficulties. The existence of the Church of England as a beneficent and harmonious system is at stake, and I cannot admit the right of anyone to complain that he is punished for neglecting the duties he is paid to perform, so long as he is supported and protected by the whole power of the law in the honest discharge of them. While power and responsibility are joined together, no one who values the Church of Christ will regret that every one of Christ's servants has his own proper authority.

CHAPTER III.

PARSONS, OLD AND NEW.

It is no long time since rectors and vicars might be seen riding to market clad in cassock and bands. I have conversed with a lady who remembers with lively feelings of regret the imposing presence of her grandfather as he perambulated his parish attired in these clerical braveries. It seems at first difficult to believe that the change in clerical attire is so recent. The fact, however, is beyond doubt. My readers who are acquainted with the works of engravers of the last century will readily recall to mind the very common figure of the Vicar of Wakefield, or any other clerical celebrity, represented in the engravings of the day with wigs, cassocks, and bands. It would be a pleasant subject for antiquarian research to define the period in which the change occurred. I have neither the opportunity nor the requisite apparatus.

The clergy are now styled 'Reverend.' So late as the time of the Spectator, they were honoured with the address of 'Sir.' In Shakespeare's time a parson might well be known by the name of Sir Hugh Evans. Those were remote days. I can believe much concerning them. But when I reach the days of good Queen Anne, and at that recent period encounter the prefix of 'Sir' before the names of parsons, I begin to wonder when this highly honourable term went into disuse, and when the respectable form of 'Reverend' replaced it.

The great folios of stout old parsons are gone too. Look at old libraries. Note the grand form of polemical divinity. You open the page to light upon a garden of Greek and Latin quotations with high and mighty arguments above the comprehension of the vulgar, level only with the capacities of rectors and deans. Your religious literature is now a secular thing. It must suit every palate. It is offered to every reader.

These grand old gentlemen have dismounted from their high horses, laid aside cassock and band, discarded the ponderous learning of

ancient days. They accoutre themselves in shooting-jackets, discuss clerical questions with laymen, adapt themselves to popular apprehension. It was not a matter of taste, but of necessity. The law relieved laymen of disabilities. Advancing education fitted them for the discussion of Church problems. The rector who wished to retain his congregation needed, towards the end of the last century, to descend to their level, associate himself with their wants, appreciate their difficulties, and reason with their doubts. He had to show that, apart from his books, his peculiar attire, and his old-fashioned name, he could maintain the claims of Christianity upon popular feeling; that his external trappings were not his only title to respect. Off went wig and cassock, on went shooting-jacket and round hat.

Religious controversy was no longer a battle of parsons. It became a battle of communities. The parson was but one amongst the many combatants who adventured themselves in the mêlée. No clerical rank barred the claim of any parishioner to argue with his vicar. The newspapers conducted the disputes which had

in the attire of the past century. Whenever I meet a London clergyman in such a dress I respect his zeal and think lightly of his judgment. Revolutions are not effected in that way. It was a poor experiment, but Christian efforts must for the present be tentative, and perhaps it is well to try every experiment. In the light of experiments I regard the evangelical systems of prayer meetings and exciting oratory, the high Church system of frequent communions and high ritual with brilliant music, and the general philanthropical plans of baths and ragged schools of the liberal clergy. Great interests are at stake. The very existence of the Church depends on the position of the clergy. All honour to the men who in any way attempt the task of adjusting the relations of the clergy and laity under the circumstances of English society.

With a view to elicit clerical opinion on the present necessities of the Church, I inserted a carefully constructed advertisement in a well-known newspaper. I received in reply one hundred and nine letters from incumbents seeking curates. Half of these applicants wanted only a cheap curate, disguising under a thin

layer of phrases about interesting sphere of labour or pleasant neighbourhood, the unpalatable offers of sixty pounds a year. These were the unambitious parsons, satisfied to leave well alone even if it was not very well. Others required 'gentlemen,' apparently convinced that manners, tact, and good education would succeed, and that an ungentlemanly gospel was a failure. Others laid great stress upon house to house visitation, and devotion to educational work in night and ragged schools. One applicant would receive no curate who would not preach the gospel 'doctrinally, practically, and experimentally,' whatever that may mean. A second called for a curate 'of decided personal piety,' appending a note, '(See Bishop Wilson's Life, p. 330.)' A third particularly required a musical man, as his people would not join heartily in the Church service without music. Here, then, were some half-dozen or more experiments for imparting increased efficiency to the preaching of the gospel. Amidst so much confusion and uncertainty are the clergy endeavouring to strengthen their position and develope the virtues of their office. What more

convincing proof could be required of the experimental character of clerical exertions? If the laity are ignorant of the claims of the clergy to respect, the clergy have evidently not made up their minds how to establish them.

I think it will be admitted that these experiments have not been altogether successful. In the Evangelical school the public have been taught an undue admiration of profuse oratory and professionally religious phraseology. It is the orator, and not the minister of Christ's Church, who is honoured. Amongst high Churchmen, veneration for fine churches, attachment to choral singing, and love for art, have been diffused without a corresponding growth of respect for the work of Christian ministration. Every clergyman knows how easy it is to obtain money for building a pretty church, and the difficulty of obtaining a five-pound note towards the endowment of the minister. In the last case it has set people enquiring why for purposes of general philanthropy the clergy should be more honoured than the relieving officer or the parish doctor; why should they claim peculiar respect and a distinctive position; why, but for his

social rank as a clergyman, should he be more respected than a dissenting minister; and whether it is not rather a love of music, a love of architecture, and regard for social customs which retains the laity in allegiance to the Church of England than any true knowledge or reverence for its purely spiritual value? Such are the enquiries now disturbing the minds of Englishmen.

That candidates should fear to enter a profession where so little seems settled and defined; that clergymen should be leaving it in despair; that patronage should be distributed capriciously, because the merits which Church patrons should reward are vague and uncertain to the patrons themselves; that no political party in England seems to care particularly for the restoration of the Church, for the improvement of the condition of the clergy, or the principles of Christian polity; that the laity should wander in utter bewilderment from parson to parson, from church to chapel, from high Church to low Church; that incumbents should want impossible curates, and curates look round for impossible incumbents—all this is a natural

consequence of a state of things in which neither what the clergy should do, nor what the laity should expect, is in any way defined. The only officer of the Church of England whose comfort is established upon a sure foundation is the wealthy rector or vicar, who accepts his tithes as a pleasant annuity, discharges routine duties, and troubles himself neither about theories nor the feverish philosophers who invent them.

Out of this chaos of undefined responsibilities the clerical character must be raised before the Church of Christ can assume its ancient influence over the moral evils of the world. Whether every clergyman must do that for himself, or whether some master-mind, rising above the miserable religious squabbles of the day, will do it for him, remains to be seen. The continuance of uncertainty upon vital points of the ecclesiastical system is productive of the most disastrous consequences. Wise men will continue to keep away from a profession in which no man knows precisely his duty, nor can define the grounds upon which he, as a Christian minister, claims a deference which is not paid to a Sunday magazine, a relieving officer, or a schoolmaster.

The estimation in which the Church and its ministers will be held must depend upon the clearness of the evidence that there is a great and holy work to be accomplished in the world which secular power and its ministers have never accomplished, and never can. That such a work exists, no one who believes in the divine mission of Christ's Church can doubt. It remains, then, for religious thinkers in this transitional period to define accurately the sphere of clerical work, to enumerate the means by which it is to be undertaken and completed, and to state accurately the grounds upon which the ministers of the Church claim public honour and public reward. Old things are passed away—cassocks, ecclesiastical status, and corporate exclusiveness. All things are become new, and amidst these novelties the world and the clergy are now asking what is the minister of Christ, what is his work, and why should he be rewarded? He who can satisfactorily answer these questions will have rendered to the Church and the world good and laudable service.

That there is such a work, no Christian can

doubt. That it is a work needing great tact, good judgment, large information, is equally certain. To commit it to a class of men inadequately acquainted with the literature of the day, and the progress of society, without good sense or good manners, and to expect a better class of men under present circumstances, is a course pregnant with certain disaster, and recommended by no reasonable argument.

CHAPTER IV.

PARISHES.

WERE I a parson of an easy turn of mind, after the fashion of sixty years ago, and were I in search of some quiet nook of clerical comfort, I should wish that my resting-place might be established in a manorial living, in which I might be at once the squire, the landlord, and the rector of the parish. I have noticed that objectors to Church rates, rank Dissenters, and carping critics of the rector's sermon, never continue in a long stay under such a *régime*. There the Church is always venerated. There dissent sends up but a weak and miserable growth of sectarianism. I have such a parish in my eye now. It is a peaceful spot. The rector rules over his tenants in the field, and over his parishioners in church. He is a man of energy, and has once held high public office. He boasted to me of his parochial successes, of his influence in the parish, of the decay of

dissent, that but two Dissenters remained beneath his rule. Perhaps it was forgetfulness on his part, but he forgot to mention that he was the landlord of every house and acre in the parish.

Nor should I object to be the squire's friend or brother, to preach to his tenants and cottagers in his own parish. I should wish to be like Rector K——, who is so effectually supported by Sir William that every public-house in the place is closed upon the Church festivals; or like D——, who can afford to leave his people unvisited, and the work to his curates. I should neither be discomfited in the vestry, nor worried by my enemies during my calls.

I should not care so much for a remote rural parish, where jolly farmers attend service in the morning and sleep over my sermon, where not even a ripple of the agitation of political life is ever felt. If there are no defeats there are also no triumphs; and if I have no wish to lead the life of a crusader, I should still less be contented with the monotonous existence of a rural policeman.

I should certainly avoid, were I seeking my

own ease and comfort, the towns where an intelligent and exacting community, keen on the subject of Church rates, and fond of cheap religious literature, confront and criticise the parish parson. I have sighed over E——, who was expelled from L—— by the bitterness of religious strife; and over him who now at C—— drags out a burdensome life under repeated insults. Who would not pity poor P——, whose private troubles formed the groundwork of a most uncomfortable unpopularity! Perhaps, had I an imperturbable temper, great powers of conciliation, and unusual tact in the management of men, I might be pleased with the grateful power of my position. But stay! If I had a large family and expensive sons, should I not then complain that my services were inadequately remunerated?

CHAPTER V.

CHURCH FINANCE.

THE amount of a clergyman's income is regulated neither by the area of the parish, the number of the parishioners, nor, excepting in a few rare cases, by his ministerial success. The incumbent of a wide agricultural parish with a sparse population may receive a thousand a year, while the incumbent of a district with a dense population may be realising but 150*l.* From the rich livings in the Fens to the unhappy spot where the bells are rung when a clergyman can be found to accept the charge of it, there may be found every degree of clerical income and every disparity between clerical labour and clerical remuneration.

The injustice of the system is notoriously great: it will soon be greater. A stringent law of settlement retained the bulk of the population within their respective parishes. A tithe of the produce of the parish was a fitting payment for

the clergyman who had the spiritual charge of the poor born within it. The law of settlement is now greatly relaxed. The railway system facilitates the dispersion of the population. The poor are now as migratory as the rich; they follow the fluctuations of trade; they live in one parish and labour in another; they journey to their work by rail and return in the evening.

Already many of the churches in the City are deserted. Some (see Note) may be sold by auction. The incumbents and their stipends remain untouched. There are too many churches and too many clergymen in the City, while the cry everywhere else is for more churches and more clergy. It remains to be seen whether the same result will not take place in country parishes when the great landowner removes his labourers to an adjoining district, and remains, with the clergyman and their two households, the sole inhabitants. The justice of payment by tithes depends upon the maintenance of a strict law of settlement.

When, in consequence of the establishment of manufactories, large populations are rapidly aggregated, an attempt is made to relieve the

incumbent of the parish of this sudden increase of responsibility by the erection of a district church. The new incumbent generally derives his income from pew rents and voluntary offerings. He is dependent on his profession, and is obliged to court popularity. He has the hardest work and the least trustworthy income. His countenance has not the quiet refulgence of the rector of the parish. He feels himself an injured man.

If, in consequence of further mutations of trade, the population again falls off, his income falls off with it. Perhaps we have yet to see in England the spectacle of many churches deserted by their congregations, and many neighbourhoods as deserted on the Sunday as is the City of London. It is a curious subject for study. But to return to the question of the sources of clerical income and its consequences.

The widely different circumstances under which a clergyman's income is gained and spent have combined to produce three well-marked clerical types of character.

The receiver of tithe and farmer of glebe is

a frank, hearty gentleman, a preacher of comfortable doctrine, a hater of Radicals and innovation, a member of archæological societies, fond of cricket and archery, with a kind word for his neighbour, and a bottle of port wine for the poor.

The receiver of pew rents appears in two characters.

If he is bold, and possesses private means, he aspires to popularity, he preaches enthusiastic sermons, he persecutes his friends with pamphlets and charitable statements, begs subscriptions for nondescript charities with the pertinacity of a blind beggar in Italy; he needs firm friends, and willingly leads a party. He is usually a decided Churchman of high or low tendencies, nor is he without a certain shrewd knowledge of business.

If he is the poor incumbent of a very poor district, he drags out a meek existence. He plods on with anxious thoughts about the price of coals. His income is a fixed quantity. He creeps through the world into the light of heaven. Not for him are the pleasures of the rich, or the expensive popularity of public

meetings. He baptizes, buries, and marries with exemplary regularity, and sinks into an honourable and happy grave.

As a consequence of their different social positions, there is a natural lack of appreciation of one another's difficulties and virtues. The old-fashioned rector views with ill-concealed contempt the pushing tactics of the proprietor of pew rents, and speaks of the poor parson with respectful but decided commiseration. He is himself in return regarded as an antiquated and inefficient clergyman, or as an engrosser of the emoluments intended for the sustentation of the whole Church. The poor district incumbent, as he despatches his letter to the Clergy Relief Society for cast-off clothes, sighs over the worldliness of the wealthy clergy, and yet confesses that rather than make a trade of his religion he will live on poor to the end. The antagonism may be natural. Is it not at the same time a grave hindrance to the work of the Church?

NOTE.—I have not omitted to take into consideration the Bishop of London's Bill for the union of City

benefices, and the transfer of surplus funds. It is now five years since that Bill, after many mutilations effected by opponents who knew what they wanted a great deal better than the bishop knew what *he* wanted, became law. That the measure was either absurdly limited in its scope, or, like all Church Bills, impracticable in the working, may be concluded from the following extract from the *Observer* of February 25, 1866:—'*A City Congregation.*—At the church of St. Mildred's, Poultry, last Sunday morning, there was only one person to form a congregation, and there was consequently no service. The rector's income is 170*l.* a year, the patronage being vested in the Lord Chancellor and the Mercers' Company alternately.'

CHAPTER VI.

A LETTER TO A CANDIDATE FOR HOLY ORDERS.

My dear young friend,

Virtue, so often its own reward in this world, is not so in the Church.

If you have the merit to be the son of a bishop, or the near relative of a lay patron, or the son of a staunch political agent, or if perchance you have meritoriously married into a patron's family, you may reasonably calculate on very substantial preferment. 'Perambulabis astra sidus aureum.' Men of these merits are the Russells and Phipps of the ecclesiastical service. It would please me much to accompany you through the several dioceses, and point out how effectually these merits have secured the rewards of the wealthiest Church preferment in England.

If, as a fellow of college, you can hold on to monastic life, compensating yourself for the loss of a woman's love by a critical study of old port

and common-room luxuries; if you can bear eight years of a naval chaplaincy; or if, though on this point I speak with hesitation, you can secure a chaplaincy in the army, honours will be thrust upon you. You will in time be offered a benefice, which you may decline or accept at pleasure.

Besides, such benefices as are not worth buying are bestowed upon the clergy as rewards of merit. Amongst such valuable pieces of preferment are district churches in the Potteries, the Black Country, or Bethnal Green, small rectories in the Fens or remote country districts, and sundry elaborate edifices, recently built regardless of expense, in which nothing has been forgotten except adequate remuneration for the incumbent.

I would not wish you to be hoodwinked by plausible stories respecting the promotion of clergymen. Do not listen to the legends of this or that clergyman, whose exemplary labours have been handsomely and gratuitously rewarded. Distrust all such deceitful glosses and explanations. Merit is certainly rewarded within the Church. In saying this, I would not

be understood to affirm that any clergyman, by dint of laborious pastoral work, could reach preferment worth having. After much experience, and the investigation of many cases, I have not found a single example of such fortune. Valuable preferment is bestowed when in public patronage upon relations or political allies. Private patrons, who have no connections to reward, sell their preferment. Doubtless there are exceptions to this rule. I have never met with one.

An unconnected clergyman may certainly rise from the ranks of the Church to its highest dignities, just as a private soldier may grasp, before he dies, a field-marshal's baton. I would not advise you to enlist upon such expectations.

It is no secret that benefices are sold when they are worth selling. One agent, I am told, advertises between three and four hundred to intending purchasers, while every country solicitor transacts occasionally the quiet transfer of a neighbouring living. I know a neighbourhood where a radius of three miles touches eight parishes. The charge of five of these was acquired by purchase, two were not worth buying

(they were rewards of merit), and the last was unsaleable, in the patronage of a bishop, and held by a bishop's chaplain.

You are young. You are indignant at this sale of men's souls to the highest bidder. Be reasonable, my young friend. A benefice is worth seven or eight years' purchase. Can you expect a mortal patron, in this age of money, to bestow upon a pious clergyman the present of 800*l.* a year for the promotion of virtue when he can sell it for 5,600*l.*? *O cæca mens hominum!* what benighted ignorance of human nature! Who would patronise religion and virtue at the cost of so many thousand pounds?

Why be angry that mortal men sell what the law expressly permits them, or what long-established custom authorises to sell? Blame the law and custom, but do not blame the patrons who think themselves justified in acting in accordance with both.

Nor must you rashly condemn the bishops for collating their chaplains and relations to their choice preferment. They preside over so large a body of clergy that they cannot learn the comparative merits of every individual. A pushing

parson may rise to notoriety by pamphleteering, by oratory at public meetings, by persistent begging for strange charities. The bishop knows *him*. But can the bishop be sure that such enterprise deserves reward, or that in rewarding it he will escape the charge of injustice to quiet and laborious merit? As matters stand, he distrusts the pushing parson, while the quiet parish priest never comes to his notice at all.

In this dilemma he usually adopts the following course. He rewards his friends or immediate neighbours, whose merits he can easily discover and willingly reward. In the case of unknown men (supposing that there is preferment sufficient to reach out to that length), he selects the richest candidate, tying him down to the building of schools, or the restoration of his church. He gains a practical and visible result in this way. The diocese is smartened up, so to speak. In extreme cases he places his preferment at the disposal of an archdeacon or rural dean, who has again his own little coterie to reward. Between so many stools, your unattached parson must come to the ground.

The clergy are crying out for more bishops; the

laity are denouncing the abuses of private patronage. Mere cries of hopeless distress! Where are the funds for the new bishops' salaries? How are these new officers to be adjusted to the old hierarchy with reference to the political and ecclesiastical status of the elder brethren? Every new bishop would have a new set of acquaintances. There is no road out of the difficulty that way.

Meanwhile the number of churches and the number of clergy are yearly increasing, and, in consequence, the difficulties of episcopal superintendence are proportionately greater. If the service is so inefficiently directed now, what must be the state of the Church ten years hence?

I deplore the position of private patronage. But how can it be altered? A patron buys with the sanction of the law, and must therefore be permitted to sell with the sanction of the law the property he has bought. You cannot deprive him of his right without compensation. Supposing even that compensation could be found, there would still be the difficulty of arranging for the transfer of patronage in case the patron

died without heirs, or became, through poverty or crime, unfit to dispose of it.

My dear young friend, you see the field of labour open before you. I have described it as I have found it. If it is not inviting now, judge whether it can be so for many years to come.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CURATES.

THE Roman legionary who, after twenty years of hard fighting, received a grant of land in the hills of Pannonia or in the swamps of Batavia as a reward of meritorious service, is a fair counterpart of the modern curate, who drags out his declining years in a district church, or a rectory in a rural wilderness. Dismissed in his old age, sometimes without provision, at best with provision inadequate to his wants, he is relegated to an obscure and inaccessible region, that his example may not teach the present generation how worthless the pious labours of a lifetime are accounted by the patrons of the Church.

Who can be surprised that the analogy is traceable into further detail?—that the curates, like the Roman soldiery, are now in revolt against the Government, that they have deter-

mined to withhold their support from a syst
which accepts without remunerating their s
vices. The papers teem with letters upon
dearth of curates, as if curates were not n
as plentiful as in any period of the Chu
There is no dearth—as anyone may satisfy h
self by investigating the pages of the Cle
List. There are plenty of curates, but they h
revolted. In the language of these days, t
are on strike.

Twenty years ago, when the effects of mod
changes were discernible in the candidates
ordination, a panic seized the minds of chu
men. Incumbents discovered that the valu
their livings depended upon the rate of cle
stipend to curates. Bishops feared the gro
of dissent. In their common alarm, it was
cided to accept candidates on easier terms,
to establish cheap theological colleges. Sl
men, who had a stronger vocation to the pu
than the counter; officers in the army and n
who felt a pious vocation; pupil-teachers,
were capable of a little Latin and Greek
were invited, and all received. I spoke bu
cently with a poor man, who told me, with t

in his eyes, how he, being then an engineer, earning four pounds a week, accepted the call, and now with wife and children cannot obtain thirty shillings. The purveyors of clergy went out into the highway, and by generous promises introduced a nondescript body of recruits.

The seed which was so carelessly sown has grown up into a harvest which no one knows how to reap. Both parties are thoroughly disgusted with the results of the transaction. Incumbents and laity fail to appreciate the good qualities of the poor clergy under their eccentricities and bad manners. The poor clergy ask piteously why they were invited to accept holy orders, if incumbents required only gentlemen and graduates from the University with independent means? In mutual disgust, both parties are drawing apart. A reaction has set in. There is a talk of establishing a cheap college at Oxford for the creation of cheap gentlemen. The Bishop of Exeter is said to require a property qualification of 30*l.* for every candidate for ordination. Other bishops refuse to ordain literates, and the Theological colleges are attempting to establish themselves on a new basis

as finishing schools for University graduates. Meanwhile, the victims of the first attempt to obtain cheap clergymen are expiating their folly in attics.

If I might describe the wants of the Church, I should do it in these words. Wanted, a curate with the manners of a gentleman, the morals of a saint, and the tact of a statesman. He must be prepared to visit the bedside of fever-stricken invalids, and the hovels of the poor. He must endure the caprices of the rich, and be willing to beg the grudged charity of the churl and the miser. He must be indefatigable in teaching the child and consoling the aged. He must preside over penny clubs. He must deliver lectures at penny readings. He must accept the direction of the incumbent, to whose will he must subordinate his conscience. All this he must be prepared to do in return for a hundred a year, or possibly a hundred and fifty. No guarantee will be offered of further emolument or promotion. It is distinctly understood, that neither bishop nor private patron holds out hopes of further reward than the immediate stipend which he receives.

I think that advertisement would fairly describe the just expectations of the unbeneficed clergy—the work which the exigencies of modern times demand of them, and the utter absence of all provision for their old age.

It was not so once. Laymen will hardly believe that one of the canons expressly forbids the ordination of any man, except where sufficient maintenance can be found for him; enjoining the bishop to support his nominee till he can find him preferment, in case the supposed maintenance should prove inadequate. Of course, by a subtle piece of legal ingenuity, this canon is practically evaded; yet, in spite of this evasion, the canon (if I remember rightly, the xxxiiird) stands in silent witness. How the penny papers would rejoice if a score of curates appeared at the bishop's gate, and, after presenting their cards and compliments, begged to partake of his lordship's hospitality till he could find them a benefice!

A year or so ago appeared an article in the 'Times' upon a work which purported to describe 'The Church as a Profession.' The field of ecclesiastical labour was pourtrayed in the most

glowing colours. There were so many prizes of 5,000*l.* a year, so many of 1,000*l.*, so many of 500*l.*, and so on. It was quietly assumed that these prizes were open to public competition; that they were rewards of merit; that every curate might entertain a just hope of obtaining them. That pamphlet was issued by authority: I leave to the authors of it the responsibility of the extraordinary statements which were found in it. I confess that I am surprised to find that, in the face of information open to all upon the present state of Church patronage, any man of respectability could have been found bold enough to give it his sanction.

There should have been appended to this description of the promised land the reports of the societies for begging old clothes for the clergy, for the collection of stipends for curates, for establishing a friendly club for those who cannot afford to insure, and for educating their children. The book on 'The Church as a Profession' is an attempt to get light without a shadow. Now the Church of England has some very deep shadows. You will get a fair glimpse of them by reading the reports of the Clergy Relief, the

Additional Curates, and the Clergy Mutual Aid Societies.

Suppose, however, that the efforts of the writer of that *brochure* proved successful, and a thousand new clergy were added to the clergy list. What would be the result? The already miserable stipends of curates would fall. Those whose stipends are barely sufficient to support life would be driven to the workhouse. They have no other refuge. Their habits unfit them for secular life. If they ventured into trade, they would, at the same time, lose their character and the bishop's licence. They cannot set up a little Church of their own, because the whole of England is divided into so many parochial despotisms, within which each incumbent reigns supreme.

Here, then, lies the peculiar hardship of an unbeneficed clergyman's position. The purveyors of clerical aid have the power of reducing his wages—indeed, of starving him—while he has no effectual means of raising them. If he strikes for higher pay, the bishops have the power of swamping the whole profession for forty years. If there was free trade in the Church as there is in the sister professions; if a clergyman could

preach when and where he liked; could lay down his orders and enter trade without loss of character and the sacrifice of clerical status, the rate of clerical payment would quickly reach its normal level.

Every principle of political economy is set at defiance under the present arrangement. There is free trade in the creation of clergymen without free trade in the distribution of clerical labour. It may be natural that those who are interested in the supply of cheap clerical assistance should not see that if the Church may, at any bishop's caprice, be flooded with unnecessary curates, the curates already within it should have legal right and facilities to leave it; but it does surprise me to observe the line which Parliament took upon this subject.

Parliament declined to accept the bill for relieving of holy orders those who, either from natural distaste or other reasons, wished to return to secular life. Without defiance of the law, no clergyman can now leave the Church within which he may be a pauper, or a scandal, or simply a useless incumbrance. The refusal of this act of justice is a significant evidence of popular

indifference to clerical troubles. But its value must not be over-estimated. A clergyman is held fast to his profession not merely by law but by the moral force of popular opinion. He is condemned as a sordid deserter if he passes over from the Church into the world. He leaves much of his character behind him in the transmigration. You may abrogate laws of Parliament, but not the strong popular sentiment. The moral check will always remain powerful, even if the legal check against the desertion of parsons be done away. To keep up, therefore, the true relation between supply and demand, labour and employment in the Church, the great remedy must always be a careful distribution of holy orders—a distribution made, not in accordance with popular outcry, but with the well-ascertained capability of the Church to maintain the clergy ordained to it.

For the cry for more curates is in reality a cry for cheaper curates. There are numberless unemployed clergy who would gladly accept curacies with a fair stipend. I see in the clerical papers that one agent alone advertises a list of sixty clergymen, with good references, who seek

curacies with house accommodation. But here is one of the great wants of the Church, that no register of unemployed clergy is kept by the bishops, and, therefore, in conferring holy orders, the bishops are in absolute ignorance how far they are weakening the Church by admitting superfluous labour into a strictly close profession, where the rule of supply and demand is controlled by extraordinary conditions.

A third part of the clergy are unbeneficed. For a sum, which to most of them barely brings daily bread for their family, they devote themselves to the maintenance of great moral principles, to the preaching of eternal truth, to the task of making mankind wiser and happier. They have sacrificed not only themselves, but their wives and families. Blame them not that they marry. The scandal of a poor married clergy is infinitely less than the inevitable scandal of an immoral unmarried clergy. Render justice to a class of men who, for the love of Christ, have borne with the evils of a system which placed the rewards of clerical labour in other people's pockets. It is a dishonourable and unworthy policy, sure in the end to be

disastrous, to reduce them to the acceptance of an inadequate stipend by multiplying unnecessarily the number of forced labourers. The day has passed by when such a scheme can be safely attempted or generally applauded.

The restoration of the unbeneficed clergy to a satisfactory position can be effected only in connection with a wider scheme of reform. That reform can never be undertaken by those who are pecuniarily interested in the present distribution of Church funds. It remains for the State to take in hand the consideration of the ecclesiastical officers, who are with its sanction appointed to the work of God in the nation, and in the following chapter I will indicate how State action could be most efficiently applied.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THINGS TO COME.

It is a mere waste of time to expect any relief for curates from the efforts of incumbents. The poorer the pay of the curate, the richer is the rector who pays him. Incumbents have therefore an interest in keeping the pay of curates at its lowest level.

Still less can be expected from the bishops. With the best intentions, they cannot sacrifice the good-will of incumbents, which *is* valuable to a bishop, to obtain the good-will of curates, which is worth nothing at all. Least of all can curates help themselves. If they strike, the bishops, terrified by the cry of dismay from incumbents, ordain with titles cheap curates of such character and ability as they can collect to supply the deficiency. The crisis passes over. The curates return to work at lower rates of pay, and the new curates find that they are for

life members of a close profession for which, as they are generally without a University degree, incumbents are ready to pronounce them unfit. The one class of curates are defrauded of their just expectations; the other are deceived by a temporary want into a service for which they are not fitted.

A clergyman ought not to be placed in a position where he must beg his bread. His devotion to his religious duties ought not to be paralysed by the necessity of providing for his daily wants from secular sources. He is lost to the Church if he is taught that to live he must scramble for Church preferment or secular profits. The preacher of the blessings of poverty should not be rich; but neither, on the other hand, will his teaching carry much weight if the teacher stands uncared for and unrewarded—a standing proof of the very low rate at which his value is estimated. There are two great evils in the organisation of the Church to be avoided. The clergy ought not to be corrupted into a body of place hunters by the offer of rich prizes for those who will use worldly art in seeking for them. They ought not to be

degraded by being consigned to poverty as victims of a detestable political system. They ought not to be taught that the more quietly a clergyman devotes himself to the performance of pastoral duty, the more certain he is to be left in a swamp of destitution as a poor incumbent or a poor curate.

Church preferment in the hands of public officers is justly capable of being organised by State authority for the improvement of the condition of the clergy. It would be no difficult task to lay down a scheme which, without injury to anyone's rights, would satisfy legitimate expectations. Establish a principle upon which Church preferment is to be distributed, and let that principle be avowed. Let it be long service, or literary ability, or episcopal favour, or poverty, or fecundity. If the principle is a bad one, it will soon give way to a better. If it is a good one, the clergy will have in it a guide to the proper conduct of clerical life.

I imagine that hard service must be marked out for special reward. I wish to lay down no principle. I only point out the direction in which Church reformers will probably proceed

when they once commence laying down principles. Without the establishment of some such regulation, how will it be possible to obtain incumbents and curates in the Potteries of Staffordshire, or amongst the violent populations of seaport towns? You do not get the best men for the most difficult posts. You simply take the recruits who offer their services. Supposing that it were a rule of the service that ten years' labour in such localities would, with the approval of the bishop, be recompensed by preferment to some quiet resting-place for old age, with how much spirit laborious spheres of labour would be undertaken!

Besides, such a principle would exclude bishops' chaplains and relatives, and such other idle members of the clerical service as now swallow up all the rewards of labour and patience. Why bishops' chaplains should be rewarded with preferment to posts for which, so far as my experience goes, they are singularly unfit, is an inscrutable mystery. They are fit to be members of Convocation. Perhaps to that assembly they will confine their labours.

Then, again, if increased consideration and

ease were offered at the end, less pay would be accepted at the beginning. A curate would willingly receive half his present stipend if, after years of hard labour and anxious attendance on the service of God, he were sure of any other resting-place than the grave. If the public patronage of the Church were ostensibly pledged to be a reward of certain services publicly rendered, all the doubts which exclude able men from holy office would be at an end.

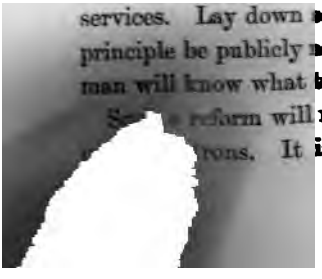
The wicked and silly argument that no consideration of riches or poverty ought to weigh with the candidate for holy orders hardly deserves notice. He who is called to serve God must obey the call as it comes to him. But he who is called to accept certain conditions under which he is to serve God is called to accept a certain political system as the means by which the people are to be evangelised. He who enters the Church of England sacrifices his liberty of serving God as his conscience moves him. He cannot preach where he likes nor when he likes, not against the sins of a neighbouring parish, not against the sins of his own parish, if his incumbent disapproves of it. The Church of

Christ is one thing, the political and financial arrangements by which the Church of Christ is hampered are another. The candidate for holy orders who does not reflect anxiously upon the secular impediments of the Church of England, as well as upon his duty to the Church of Christ, is not likely to be a valuable member of any service. It is not only not wrong, but it is a positive duty of every candidate for holy orders to reflect whether, in entering the Church of England, his faith, his hope, and his charity, will succumb to the harassing impediments and the shameless secularity of the political system of which he is about to become a member.

There is sufficient wealth at the disposal of public officers to remunerate adequately every clergyman whose services are really needed. The ecclesiastical officers need not beg old clothes and presents of second-hand books to carry on the service of the Church. Organise a scale of preferment, fix the conditions upon which clerical labour and ability shall be recognised, and the Church will not need the help of mendacious recruiting officers. No private

interest need be assailed. All that is needed is a better system of distributing public money in the hands of public officers.

As a consequence of a reorganised system of preferment must come a classification of clerical labour. The bishop's chaplain who has spent five years in the bishop's study, or in visiting the parochial clergy in the bishop's company, can scarcely claim the same meed with a brother of equal ability who for the same period has fought a hand-to-hand struggle with infidelity and pestilence in a densely populated district in the Black Country. The incumbent of a pestilential living in the Fens ought not to be ranked in the same line with the easy rector of a neat little parish in Sussex. The successful parson of a country town ought not to be ranked in the same scale with the hot-headed and injudicious strategist who has embroiled for years the peace of his neighbourhood. Classify these services. Lay down some principle. Let that principle be publicly notified, and every clergyman will know what to expect.



Such reform will not be carried out by the patrons. It is absurd to expect such

self-denial. It must be effected by Government disposing, for the public interests, of public money.

Let us suppose that the present hap-hazard system is continued. The Church is no longer an attractive profession. The candidates for holy orders are pass-men from the University; military men tired of the army; scripture readers who accept titles in disagreeable parishes; two-year theological students, of whom the world has lately heard enough. The old stamp of parson, contented, for the honour of his family and the Church, to live penuriously, is extinct. Your modern candidate enters holy orders with the determination to live from it. The harvest is yet to be reaped. We have still to see the consequences of accepting their services without a preliminary understanding that they must of necessity be almost gratuitous. Other professions compensate small pay by large hopes. The Church has no such plan of satisfying the clamour of the hungry. The day must come when a revolt of the unpaid against the paid will be established. Some great scandal, some case of great destitution,

will move the hearts of the people. Then there will be a violent outcry, with popular determination to reform. Ecclesiastical patronage, now so wastefully administered by public officers, will be transferred to an inaccessible and much reviled Commission. There will then be no thought of wise prospective reform. The great object will be to satisfy, by sacrifice, popular indignation. Amidst the confusion and evil passions of such a time, who can hope for any good to the Church? Who will then be able to forbear a regret that a wise measure of reform had not been enacted when temperate counsels could easily have carried the day?

Never was there a time when able and intelligent men were more needed to vindicate divine authority against human evil. Well might Dr. Newman declare that he was bewildered at the progress of art and the exuberance of wealth. It is difficult to discover by what process those potent powers are to be subdued under the yoke of Christ. Certainly, this result will never be effected by the instrumentality of such men as bishops are fain to accept at ordination.

Candidates for holy orders ask for justice and not charity, for hope and not immediate payment, for a reorganisation of the system of ecclesiastical preferment and not for new systems of mendicancy. But to whom can they prefer these petitions with a chance of success? Not to Convocation, which represents the classes interested in the present form of preferment. Not to the bishops, whose last effort is a scheme for inducing the public to remedy by charity the injustice of the Church. Were either Convocation or the bishops willing to do justice, they have not the power. The only hope of the Church lies in an appeal to Parliament. It cannot be that not a single member cares as much about the average of parsons as the average of corn, and less for the sorrows of a curate than for those of a tide-waiter. I will not believe that the charge of the most vital interests of the nation, and of the funds set apart for their support, is a matter of indifference to its representatives. I will yet hope that some earnest and far-sighted members of the legislature, disgusted at the spectacle of the Church demoralised by systematic injustice and contriving to pay its poorer servants by the aid of

organised mendicancy, will yet move for a Royal Commission to investigate these evils, and to report in what manner the public preferment of the Church can best be distributed so as to remove them.

I repeat, therefore, that Parliament is alone equal to the task of Church reform—that the reform must be in substance a reorganisation of ecclesiastical finance—that the commission should lay down certain principles according to which Church preferment should be bestowed—that these principles should be publicly announced and honestly adhered to—that one of these principles should be the reward, in proportion to the means at the disposal of public patrons, of such clerical work as they shall deem worthy.

Every clergyman will, after such a reform, have a fair conception of the prospects of his position. With hope in the future, he will be ready to accept a smaller rate of remuneration for the present. If he dies unhonoured and impoverished, he will have to thank his own incompetence or misconduct.

With the hope that some large-hearted states-

man may take up in time the grave question of providing for the religious instruction of my countrymen, I bid the reader farewell, and retire for the present into silence.

APPENDIX A.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF CLERICAL LABOUR.

Of the 12,000 benefices in the Church of England, there are about a dozen either without church or without population.

370 parishes have fewer than 100 souls. The incumbents receive 50,430*l.* for the annual charge of less than 26,000 people, at the rate of one clergyman and 136*l.* to 71 persons.

855 have less than 200 souls. The incumbents receive 132,381*l.* for the charge of 119,025 souls, at the rate of one clergyman and 154*l.* to 139 souls.

In short, 1,225 clergymen are employed in the care of 145,025 souls, at a cost of 182,811*l.*, being at the rate of one clergyman and 149*l.* to 118 souls.

I have not calculated the number of parishes with a population of less than 350. I may, however, safely say that, to their own sorrow and to the great regret of all friends of the Church, *at least one quarter of the whole beneficed clergy* are engaged in the charge of ludicrously small spheres of labour.

I may add that a considerable proportion of these little but sometimes wealthy parishes are in the patronage of the Lord Chancellor or the bishops.

APPENDIX B.

THE RESOURCES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

WITHOUT entering into extensive details, which will find their place in a subsequent portion of this work, I will state to the reader the public resources of one diocese. He may then judge for himself whether clerical service need be ill remunerated or dependent upon mendicant societies.

Winchester is a small diocese. The clergy probably do not exceed 380 to 400, of whom a very large portion are provided for out of the resources of private patronage. Now, no less a sum than 15,000*l.* a year is at the disposal of public officers, Lord Chancellor, bishops, deans and chapters. The whole of this sum is, as a rule, distributed to relatives, political allies, and personal friends of patrons, with little or no reference to their services in the Church.

Can anyone doubt that with these resources a scale of preferment might easily be drawn up which, if publicly announced, and honourably executed, would offer the two guarantees which candidates for holy orders demand?—

First. That in return for their devotion to the Church, the nation will assure them a

moderate competence, and save them in old age from the workhouse and the charitable societies.

Secondly. That whether they be curates or incumbents, their hopes of advancement on the ground of ability and hard labour shall not be frustrated by systematic favouritism.

THE END.

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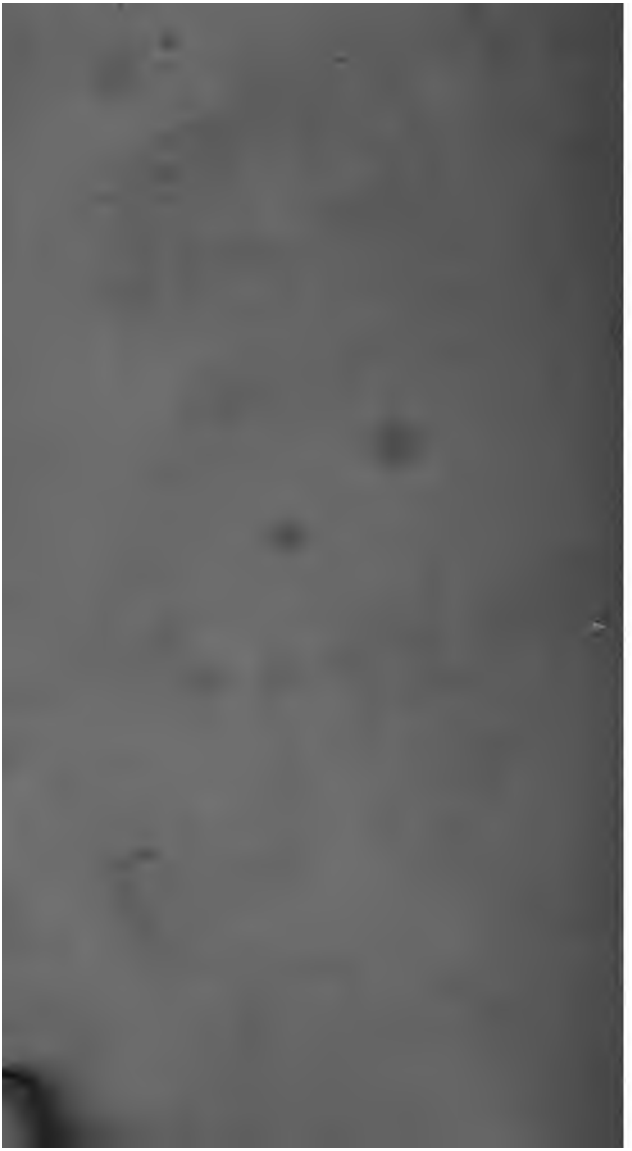

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND FROM A NEW POINT OF VIEW.

PART II.

THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

BY

FRANK SHERBORNE.

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THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THE DAWN OF TRUTH.

A sudden light broke in upon us all. It broke in not through well-contrived and well-disposed windows, but through flaws and breaches. We were taught wisdom by humiliation.—BURKE.

'TRUTH needs only to be seen in her clear image to be terribly loved.'* Thus, as he lay stretched at full length on the sward beneath the shade of the tall plane-tree on the banks of the Ilissus, the sage is represented discoursing at ease upon the problems of life. With the same placid fervour the patriot declaims as he gazes past

* Plato, *Phædr.* 250 D. (ἡ [φρόνησις =] wisdom = objective moral truth) δεινοὺς ἂν παρεῖχεν ἔρωτας, εἴ τι τοιοῦτον ἑαυτῆς ἐναργὲς εἴδωλον παρείχετο εἰς ὄψιν ἰόν.

the perplexities of political society on the forms of truth which would regenerate his country. In the solitude of his study the moralist confesses a like yearning as he looks upon the vision of moral truth. To such spirits Truth appears in all the graceful splendour of a first love, suggestive of no sorrow, accompanied by no embarrassment. In a very different guise she stands before the politician who must calculate the cost of change, the well-paid pensionary who by the accidents of life rather than his own fault lives on the proceeds of an untruthful system, or to the reformer who, loving truth for its divine value to the world, is conscious of the bitterness and anxiety which his love must encounter. To men of this stamp Truth appears austere, despotic, exacting. She is regarded by the first as a mighty deity who must be propitiated by sacrifice, by the second as an inexorable Nemesis to be shunned till the day of fate, by the last as a mighty and beneficent power for whose aid her votaries must be prepared to suffer. Nor had I neglected to take account of the various aspects of Truth when I adventured into that dismal region where

ecclesiastical falsehood and injustice do their work under cover of darkness, that I might be able to expose to the light the Truth which is vital to the safety of society and the Church of England. No one had better reason than I to know and to rue the cost of Truth. I foresaw how many amiable persons I should disturb in their pleasant retirement, how few would be pleased to be called to account for evils in the guilt of which they had been innocently involved. I attempted to do my spiriting gently: I weakened my meaning by confining it to generalities, forbore to distress individuals by exposing them to public opprobrium as a farmer nails a kestrel or a weasel against a barn door, and was content for the sake of others to dispense with the piquancy derivable from personal anecdote. Yet I was aware that with all these precautions the exhibition of Truth must be hostile to many kind and gentle spirits who, recognising by instinct the inexorable Nemesis, cared to see and hear as little of it as possible. My anticipation was verified. When I discoursed to Churchmen of the urgent necessity of reform, it was as though I had dropped down with urgent

news into some old-fashioned town in Germany, whose fortifications, speaking of the Seven Years' War, and covered with lichens, were tenanted by an old commandant who played at soldiers with a little army of pensioners, when he was not smoking in his *Lust-haus* on the walls. I have seen such a place, where the garrison cultivated potatoes on old bastions, the farmers stored their hay in the old towers, and the ramparts were the recognised play-ground for nursemaids and children. I was as one who summoned that honest and harmless garrison to convert their ancient and picturesque quarters into a modern fortress, with its angles, curtains, and escarpments, with its gravelly parade-ground echoing harshly with the perpetual drill of infantry in heavy marching order, with its bomb-proof magazine filled with shot and shell, and its martinet commandant preserving severe order throughout the precincts of the fort. Could I be surprised that though they might believe the possibility of war, one and all of them should prefer to await their doom as they were, rather than give the old home a shape in which it could no longer be of use to them?

What sympathy could the commandant feel for the place if he could no longer enjoy in it his pipe or his importance? What was the fortress to the pensioner if he could no longer grow his potatoes on the bastions? What was the whole world to a community whose life and sympathies were interwoven with this special type of existence, whose thoughts had been moulded into a solid faith in the perfection of their own little world? It was natural that they should dislike reform even more than safety—that they should prefer a few days of sweet enjoyment to years of unremitted drill and the voluntary disruption of the dearest ties. Even so was it with Churchmen. I sympathised with the shudder with which they turned from the imagination of a rigid *régime*: I appreciated their protest that if the whole world was to be laid out as a parade on which the clergy were to practise a perpetual drill, they cared to have as little as possible to do with the world in its new shape, though I felt how futile the protest against the rigid law of life must be which modern society imposes with merciless severity upon us all. So little did I expect a friendly

welcome, that I was surprised to receive the support and praise of unknown friends, and to witness from my solitary post of observation the gradual acknowledgment of the approach of great organic changes. But from the beginning I have foreseen, as I see clearly now, that though there are Churchmen who are satisfied with the Church as it is, and laymen who will be content with nothing less than its disestablishment, there is no ecclesiastical party which, even in the face of imminent danger, is prepared to promote the reform of the Church at the cost of the sacrifices which reform must entail. Yet the eventful history of the last eighteen months has revealed the reality of danger, though it has not convinced Churchmen of the necessity of instant action and sacrifice. My words have not wanted confirmation. I predicted a revolt of the curates, and a Curates' Association is already in process of formation. I indicated a new Ecclesiastical Commission as a consequence of reform: a Commission for enquiry—which, under a reformed Government, will assume very different proportions — is actually sitting on the Irish Church. I showed how the present system, under

which churches are built and the clergy are paid, appointed, and governed, has a direct tendency to create discontent and restlessness, and to protect discord and eccentricity. Let the public judge from the experience of the last eighteen months whether my demonstration was true. Time has at least produced this effect on the clerical mind — that it no longer questions whether the condition of the Church justifies discussions of reform or the proposal of extraordinary remedies. All are convinced that change has actually commenced, and that reform or disestablishment will be consummated with or without the aid of Churchmen. Signs of this new phase of clerical feeling are visible everywhere. The *Guardian* newspaper, the ablest and most gentlemanly of the clerical periodicals, after two ineffectual efforts to think for its subscribers, has found it necessary to think of itself—has adopted a policy of armed neutrality, and leaves to irresponsible correspondents the discussion of vital theological and ecclesiastical questions, till such time as the religious opinion and policy of its subscribers shall take a definite direction and be agreed on its general

principles. There are proposals for comprehending dissenters, schemes for augmenting curates' stipends, calls for funds to build churches, commissions for revising rubrics, bills in Parliament for the suppression of ritualism. There is distracted activity everywhere in the field of the national Church, which looks like an ants' nest just disturbed by the foot of a passing traveller. The futility of these fragmentary efforts will soon be manifest. We are at present only in the first stage of reform, when the threatened party believes that it can make things pleasant without rendering them unpleasant to itself. We are all convinced that something must be done—not that anything need be done which requires sacrifice and self-denial.

In this condition of clerical opinion I again break silence. I do not intend to renew the discussion on the wasteful and capricious management of ecclesiastical resources, nor to dilate to clerical readers on clerical evils. My present object is to disclose in part to the public the greatness of the work for which the Church of Christ was founded; to show that its task can-

not be accomplished without the same organisation of labour, the same honourable care for the welfare and dignity of the employed, which brings success to great commercial enterprises; and lastly, to warn reformers that discontent and hostility within and without the Church cannot be disarmed till the grievances of which clergy and dissenters alike complain are redressed. I am anxious to set this warning in a very clear light, since the popular belief of those who are attacked may induce them to attempt the conciliation of their assailants by the offer of something which their assailants do not want. Now no party was ever yet satisfied by concessions which were not demanded, while those were refused which they specially desired. No ingenuity of conception, no circumstances of grandeur, can disguise from complainants the unpalatable fact that in such a conclusion they have not obtained what they asked for, nor can they fail to be exasperated by what they must believe to be a fraudulent stratagem. The friends and defenders of the Church may adopt, without exposing themselves to the charge of folly, one of two courses. They may prolong its

existence for a few years by haughtily repudiating all innovation, and employing the tactics which, under a past parliamentary system, maintained the rotten boroughs for a hundred years against the assaults of reformers. In this case they must be prepared for the abolition of the Establishment at no distant date. They may adjust the Church to the requirements of the times by redressing the grievances which have produced wide-spread discontent within the Church and extensive hostility outside its pale. They may conciliate their assailants by granting all or a part of their demands—in which case a future of noble beneficence is open to the national Establishment. No middle course will either strengthen the Church or prevent its downfall. The concession of reforms which no one desires, the redress of grievances of which no one complains, the creation of agencies which no one will use—these are the measures which will conciliate no friends, and confer on the Church neither additional power nor dignity. What course ecclesiastical authorities may ultimately adopt, it is difficult in the present confusion of affairs to predict. It is at any rate

satisfactory to those who love the Church of Christ and desire to see it again restored to its pristine vigour and dignity, that its present evil condition cannot be long continued in the face of the new forces which the Reform Bill introduces into English society.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT A SQUIRE, OR THE THEORY OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

I know that there are some interested persons who add scorn to the afflictions of the Church of England, and because she is afflicted by men, call her forsaken of the Lord.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

I SHALL not soon forget the memorable conversation with an able and distinguished friend which induced me to visit this forgotten but populous district of H——. We were conversing comfortably before the fire, which, as is the wont of Yorkshire fires, blazed with a hospitable glow, when my friend announced his conclusion in the terse phrase 'that he had given up Christianity and had gone in for secular education' as the only adequate instrument for improving the national character, diminishing social misery, removing poverty, and consoling sorrow. 'Is not the tendency of modern thought,' he proceeded, 'in this direction?

Is not the Church being gradually supplanted by more efficient secular agencies, acknowledged to be more efficient because they are secular? Has not the distribution of charitable relief been transferred from the Christian minister to the secular relieving officer? Are not statesmen eliminating the Christian element from Governmental schools through the cautious employment of conscience clauses? If in the city of London a plan of education is proposed, do not the founders all agree, though they may agree in nothing else, to dispense with distinctive religious teaching? What conclusion can I draw from such facts except that society has consented to dispense with the aid of Christianity in the task of human improvement? Mind, I speak of Christianity only so far as regards its power to ameliorate the social condition of the country. I have nothing to say of its spiritual claims. I look around me and observe in every direction secular organisations coming into existence with much popular applause for accomplishing the task in which the Established Church of this country with its enormous wealth has signally failed. In

one sphere of Christian work alone do I detect any beneficent energy, and that very energy upon inspection proves to be due to secular causes. In country parishes where a great landlord exerts his influence in aid of the rector, in town parishes where the social influence of wealthy Churchmen is considerable, the Church is an efficient agent of civilisation. But I maintain that the improved moral tone of such neighbourhoods is distinctly traceable to the social influence of the millionaire and the landlords. Christianity, indeed, seems to me to be nothing without a squire. I have been particularly struck in London with the unvarying dead level of immorality and misery which surrounds the select circle of church-goers—an impassive wretchedness upon which Christianity, with all its new churches, seems to make no impression. I seek a remedy for this long-standing misery. I can feel for the sorrows of my neighbours if I am not a parson. My last and firmest hope is on a rigorous system of education supported and directed by the Government. You must supplant the fluctuating and uncertain teaching of Christian sects by a

clear and sharply-defined system carried out by a responsible Government. By no other scheme than this can I conceive it possible that English society can be regenerated and its evils diminished or extinguished.'

Such was my friend's argument. I could only reply as I had replied before, that he did injustice to the work of Christianity. I spoke of the labours and successes of the Church in parishes of which I had personal knowledge; but he would by no means accept my evidence, though I pleaded the cause with the sincerity of deep conviction. 'You confound,' said he, 'the influence of squires and rich folks, acting through clerical mediation, with the legitimate power of Christianity. Go to a parish where squires and wealthy church-goers are neither seen nor heard of—where no charitable foundations and bequests bribe the poor into a sham piety. When in a spirit of judicial inquiry you shall have studied such a scene, the world will readily entertain any favourable evidence you may be able to produce.'

I have accepted my friend's challenge. I am now residing in a district occupied by a popu-

lation of 10,000 souls, nearly all of whom belong to the poorest class of society. Here the compound householder and the irrepressible lodger reign supreme. Street after street extends itself in flat uniformity of helpless poverty. Built by some jobbing contractor to sell, they do not retain through a single winter even the appearance of solidity, and give little promise of endurance. Within ten years many of these rows and terraces exhibit symptoms of a premature old age. The fashion of this little world passes so rapidly away, that houses which have not been built five years are already in a state of dilapidation. Here at any rate I was sure that the power of the Church over worldly miseries might be successfully studied. I set myself heartily to the task of examining the influences, individual or organised, which were at work; and to calculate how far the Church, unaided by secular assistance, contributed to the welfare and improvement of the population of the parish.

The charitable bequests of former generations for the relief of old age or undeserved misfortune are extremely limited. The patrons of the

mother Church, considering how greatly the neighbourhood would be benefited by an additional church, and, as their enemies insinuate, how much the patronage of the mother Church would improve in value if this district with its deep poverty were cut away from the parish church, and sent adrift to provide for itself, willingly sanctioned the formation of a new division, for which a church has, within the last twenty years, been built. A portion only of the funded charities of the united parish reaches this district. It is a matter of dispute whether that portion is a just one; at any rate the vestry of the district passed a resolution that a committee should be appointed to confer upon the subject with the vestry of the mother Church—a circumstance which may be taken as sufficient evidence of the existence of a grievance. Whether the complaint be just or not, it is certain that the district receives little benefit from this source of charity, and that the influence of funded alms upon the social condition of the neighbourhood is infinitesimally small.

My first view of this lower ten thousand, and

of the little church in which they were supposed to worship, was unsatisfactory. As I passed through street after street, and noticed the dead level of poverty, relieved from its monotony only by a suspicion of crime, I was impressed with awe at the thought of the magnitude of his task who undertakes to leaven such a society with new principles, and of the national responsibility for a state of affairs so dangerous and so dishonourable. Twice during the first evening of my residence I was disturbed by a cry of murder, and, looking out, beheld a hasty row terminated by the bystanders without the aid of the police.

As I gradually became acquainted with the occupants of the several streets, a new world was opened to me; it is a land of odds and ends. Here dwells a widow who makes penny whistles which she sells wholesale to little shops; she is at once merchant and commercial traveller. A few doors away lives a single-handed manufacturer of masks and fire-stalls. In another street is a diminutive manufactory of valentines. In the next court is a widow who makes babies' hats. There are

bead-sewers, and gimpers, with many other equally heterogeneous operatives, male and female. Yet, though hanging loosely on the skirts of society, they are not without a system of social subordination, after the fashion of that which prevails in the neighbourhood of May Fair and Belgravia. There are streets in which the *élite* of the working classes for a time hold steady residence. There are others which destitution and crime haunt perpetually. Though the lines of demarcation between the different sections of labouring society are fine, they are none the less effectually in existence. From the engineer, who makes his thirty-eight shillings a week, to the dock labourer, who brings back to a squalid home what remains of the twelve, sixteen, or eighteen shillings he received in wages, and still lower, down to the costermonger or 'rough,' who is perpetually in trouble about his donkey, the aspect of gentility fades away by imperceptible gradation. The poor are none the less aristocratic because they are poor: if they do not complain of the lack of 'good society' in their street, they confess with sufficient candour that they are obliged 'to keep themselves to them-

selves, and neither to mix nor meddle with their neighbours.' They very readily profess disgust at the vagrant inhabitants of low streets who haunt the doors of public houses on Saturday night and Monday morning. Poverty may, as Shakespeare says, make men acquainted with strange bedfellows, but it will not expel the spirit of caste from the heart of a journeyman carpenter.

To one of the most disreputable streets a peculiar and illustrative history is attached. It bears the name of 'the Bay' (*i.e.* Botany Bay) among the inhabitants. I am informed that it was built contemporaneously with the demolition of St. Gile's, for the formation of New Oxford Street, and, that the evil spirits which fled from that notorious locality, settled like a swarm of bees upon it; these original settlers have long since been expelled. Their place has been filled by a succession of loose characters, male and female, who remain in residence till some outrage or scandal attracts the notice of the vestry, or necessitates a call from their landlord. It is said that a new eviction is about to take place; the character of the street will be

in no wise affected by the change: a new horde of vagrant inhabitants will install themselves on a spot the reputation of which is too notorious to admit or attract a better class of tenants.

None of these streets have an immaculate fame, they are subject to strange vicissitudes of fortune; the compound householder in his best days lives on the border land of indigent respectability. Careful observation detects an ever-recurring cycle in the affairs of his race. When the mansion of some Georgian worthy—no longer of value in this unfashionable locality*—is pulled down to give place to two rows of smart, but unsubstantial little houses, the first occupants of these tenements are the better class of artisans. For a time the court wears an air of respectability and neatness; trade is good, and rents are paid with regularity; at last comes the crash of a financial panic: work becomes scarce, the artisan no longer brings home his six-and-thirty shillings a week; coals

* This is the consequence of the sifting and redistribution of society which is in progress throughout the metropolis.

are dear, wood is dear, the 'missus' must have one or other to boil the kettle; the householder casts his eye round for something handy, his glance lights on the door of the coal-cellar; it is a useless luxury, a distressed householder can bear with much philosophy the sight of naked coal; the door is broken up, the fire is lighted, the family enjoys a cheap cup of tea; a loose paling or two meets with a similar fate, till the progress of demolition is at last arrested by the landlord, who disapproves of such inventive tenants. The next tenant is of a rather lower social grade; were he not, he would refuse to occupy a house destitute of a door to its coal-cellar and dismantled of a portion of its garden paling. He too has his troubles, work is often slack with him, he feels the universal dearness of coal and wood, and, in a happy moment, avails himself of the skirting-board or wooden mantelshelf which, as we are assured by an experienced hand, makes the best of firewood. The misdeeds brought to light by irregularity in the payment of rent provoke at length the anger of his landlord; he is summarily ejected, only to give place to a tenant who

is as indifferent to defective skirting-board and the dismantled fireplace, as his predecessor was to the absence of the coal-cellar door and the garden paling.

The cycle is now nearly completed: the house has fallen into the occupation of costers and dock labourers, if it has not been invaded by a colony of thieves and prostitutes; the game of demolition is played out with merry recklessness, the bannisters—last relic of respectability—are used to supply the grate, there are rows and perpetual scandals in the street, the newspapers tell of the new Alsatia, the vestry take alarm and notify the state of the place to the landlord, who expels the whole gang, puts in the whitewashers and carpenters, and undertakes for the first time the repair of the tenements. The eviction of his tenants is not always accomplished with ease. In a recent case one of the women declared that if she was turned out, she would go out naked, and naked she stood in the middle of the street! The houses after reparation are again let to a class rather less respectable than the mechanics who would have taken them had they been new. The work of gradual

demolition commences, to be again consummated by a final eviction, and a subsequent repair.

It is not the wont of these householders to retain the whole of their house in their own possession; they sublet one or more rooms to lodgers. In some of the streets there are as many families as rooms. I passed down one of these and noticed (it was a very warm day) at nearly every door a woman with a baby in her arms enjoying the fresh air on the door step. 'It aint werry comfortable' said a communicative omnibus driver 'to have another chap and his kids in the house, but then the money comes in so precious handy. Am I a compound householder? Well I aint sure, leastways I don't pay no rates, the missus does perhaps; I leaves that to her, Have I got a lodger? why of course I have; how am I to pay my rent if I hadn't? I should like to know that. He is a decentish chap, works at the floor-cloth factory and keeps the jolliest little dog you ever see.' So spoke my informant, gradually revealing to me the unseen economies of small households, the causes of overcrowding, and the source of much national immorality.

He did not tell me what I have learnt from other sources, that lodgers are not the most reputable portion of the community, that the female lodgers, whose ostensible occupation is the working of beads and gimp, ply another and less honest vocation, and that the unmarried men are not always models of propriety. Poverty which always lives next door to the labourer at weekly wages, compels very large forbearance on the part of the householder. The poor—fully aware of the temptations of life—willingly see as little of their neighbour's and tenant's sins as they can.

We have to deal here with a society densely packed together and yet controlled by no healthy public opinion. The moral check which so powerfully influences the middle classes, is reduced to its smallest limits amongst the poor, whose code of morality is necessarily adapted, except on special points, to the convenience of the least reputable section of the community. A poor district is rather an aggregation of individuals than a social community. The inhabitants are not without their better aspirations, they are as anxious for their own welfare as the

philanthropists who talk of them or visit them. But the irresistible despotism of want compels them to embrace conditions of life which they detest, and the corrupt associations with which their life makes them familiar, insinuates a contentment with their present circumstances from which they at last lose all desire to be free. The problem to be solved is not therefore a simple one. The mere distribution of money will not remove the evils of such a society as this, education will not counteract the corruption of vicious association. If fever is to be no longer a constant resident among our poor, if immorality is no longer to be a normal evil, if the gaol, the hospital and the Haymarket are to be spared henceforth their quota of the unhappy, the unfortunate, and the reckless, these results can be achieved only by the creation of a new society. If poverty must be saved from the necessity of accepting the acquaintance of vice; if the schoolmaster, the sanitary commissioner, and the philanthropist would insure the success of their teaching regulations and charity, they must first place the poor man in a position in which he can enjoy the encouragement of

friends and the support of a healthy public opinion, they must guard him from being dragged down in spite of his better convictions by vicious acquaintances, or from being disheartened by helpless isolation.

The government, to its honour, has commenced an attack upon the evil social conditions to which I have alluded. It is but a small attempt, yet the attempt is rightly directed. I found one day the local surveyor measuring the cubic contents of the rooms of a house in a notorious street. There is a family or a lodger in every room. By a recent Act, 300 cubic feet of space is declared necessary for each adult in a sleeping room, and overcrowding must not be carried beyond this limit. It is evident that education and religious teaching can make no head against the demoralising influence of a mode of living where every idea of morality is outraged. But this difficulty at once arises; these people pay the rent of one room with much difficulty. Supposing the Act carried into effect and the excess of tenants evicted, where are they to go, and how are they to live? The workhouse could not contain them. Is it a small danger

to turn these wild tribes by a despotic Act upon the streets and tell them to shift for themselves? Overcrowding is the consequence of a poverty created by the improvidence or the misfortunes of the poor, and while improvidence and misfortunes are allowed to develop a large indigent class whose means are unequal to the payment of rent for the legal amount of room, it is impossible to divest this salutary act of government, of the appearance of arbitrary and tyrannical rigour. It savours of a very imperfect policy to leave untouched the sources of the evils of overcrowding, by which the poor are more severely punished than their neighbours, and then fling the poor upon the world when their poverty, vice, and misfortune force them to huddle together. Wise then, as is the principle of the measure, its value is greatly diminished by the absence of an additional scheme for reducing the evils which render overcrowding an inexorable necessity. Like many other well intended measures, the Act against overcrowding imposes an expense on the poor which in their present social condition they cannot afford.

Private benevolence is not behindhand in undertaking the task of national regeneration; as you walk through these streets you will observe certain gentlemen and ladies paying visits to the poor of the neighbourhood. These are philanthropists from the adjoining parishes, or district visitors amongst ourselves, and this is the happy hunting ground for all who have money to bestow, and are willing to spend it on the poor. In accordance with the spirit of the age, many of these philanthropists distribute relief irrespective of differences of creed. They seek out the 'deserving poor,' who, being discovered, receives a shilling or a meat ticket with the prospect of other shillings to come. The rest act in connection with some religious body, and, without being exclusive, manifest a preference for those who attend particular places of religious worship. The advent of these emissaries of good is always welcome. It is a bright day in the history of the street when the visitor makes his appearance; the inhabitants with natural alacrity are ready with the stories of the struggles of poverty, and the hardship of the times. Reputable poverty

assumes its most becoming air, and wretched destitution pulls its longest face. Patiently the visitor hears, inquires, doubts; he is helpless amidst many conflicting stories: begging from much opportunity of experience has been reduced to a science, and after much sifting of evidence, the visitor hesitates between the evil reports of neighbours, and the good reports which every one has of himself; he distributes his relief with a dim consciousness that he is a wreck ashore, and that the natives are plundering him. He is aware that several liberal visitors are at work in the district, and remarks suspiciously, that he never hears of any relief received from others. His zeal cools down as he finds that his money and meat tickets produce no permanent improvement, and that the neighbourhood, after a year's labour, remains pretty much as he found it. Wearied at last with his ineffectual toil, he disappears, leaving his place to some new labourer who has yet to make his experience.

In the years during which I have laboured amongst the poor with all the ardour of a philanthropist, I have, as might be supposed,

stumbled upon salutary, if not altogether pleasant discoveries. I found myself in the outset acting in the character of a detective officer. Having started on the popular principle of relieving the deserving poor, I could find out their deserts by no other means than by private inquiry amongst neighbours, by cross-examination of those I purposed to relieve, by frequent visits at odd times, when their true character would be most likely to betray itself. I discarded all sectarian tests, and was liberal enough to make no inquiry about their religious principles or practice: I soon learnt that my philanthropy was pitted against their astuteness, that the recipients of relief, without thanks for my labour, prided themselves on their success in obtaining it, that they were as skilful in disguising what I disliked, as I was active in discovering it. I was obliged to admit that my procedure was demoralising, that it injured the self-respect of the poor, that it was in part unjust, since I should not have dared, at the risk of a horsewhipping, to have dealt with the sorrows of the rich on the same principle of private inquisition. When, therefore, I made

the further discovery, that I sometimes relieved the undeserving, sometimes rejected the deserving in spite of all precautions, I recognised reluctantly the folly of dealing with the poor in the spirit of a private detective.

At every visit I found myself embarrassed with the difficulty of defining the conditions on which my alms were offered, and of discovering whether those conditions on which the alms were received had been complied with. Was I to say that I gave this relief on condition that the house should be always kept clean, and that the husband should never get drunk, that my money should not be wasted on finery, and that the children should not be sent out to beg? If I laid down such conditions, how was I to discover whether they were observed, without an amount of espionage which was too degrading even for my zeal. The vague imagination of youthful philanthropy, that the fruits of well-bestowed charity are easily discernible in the aspect of the cottage, and the trimness of the cottager's wife and children, had long lost all influence over my mind. I sought a test of the success of my efforts, and a condition, upon which my relief

should be bestowed, and found neither. Upon the principle which I had adopted, I could neither learn whether my charity had been well-bestowed, nor could I lay down a condition which should be to the poor a distinct guide to the performance of their duty.

I then fell back upon another principle. It was unavailing to define the 'deserving' poor, either retrospectively, as those who had made good use of charitable aid, or prospectively, as those who would make good use of it. I adopted distress and sorrow in its bare form as the proper object of relief. A schoolmaster who acts as the agent of a philanthropical society, and who, as an ingenious friend remarks, carries with him an odour of little boys, once observed, that it could never be wrong to give a dinner to a man whose face looked pinched with hunger. I adopted the pinched face theory, and soon found, that I was not only usurping the functions of the relieving officer, but that I was relieving some of the most worthless characters in the place. A little reflection soon convinced me of the extreme fallacy that distress and sorrow are, *per se*, the true objects of charity; for it would follow from this

proposition, that the philanthropist should relieve the convict from his sorrows in the dock-yard, the penitentiary, or on the treadmill, since pain and distress are there manifest and indisputable. No man in his senses would accept such a consequence; society acknowledges their sufferings to be the just punishment of offences against human law, and leaves, without interference, the culprit to his fate. Must it not also acknowledge that the greater part of the vice and destitution of mankind is equally the penalty for infringing the laws which the Divine Ruler has laid down for the government of the world? In what light are we to regard social misery in the creation of a beneficent Being, except as the check which He has imposed upon the breach of His own order? Would there not be, then, the same folly in relieving indiscriminately all the sufferings of society, as in breaking open all the gaols, and remitting the sentences of the prisoners. It is plain, then, that social misery is not the true object of charity, except in two cases: first when the misery of the individual is the consequence of another's vice, or where relief will insure moral improvement and restoration.

Indiscriminate charity is said to demoralise; it has certainly created incalculable mischief in this district; I could wish that the whole army of vague philanthropists were swept out of the place. The reason of this demoralisation will now be easily understood; indiscriminate charity removes the only check and punishment which God has imposed on vice, and by which he maintains the order of society; it encourages the poor in vice, since they know that, thanks to it, the consequences of vice are not so dreadful as they were wont to be. In proportion, then, as by a mistaken impulse of charity, you screen vice from the consequences which the Almighty has decreed to it, you diminish the moral check upon the evil passions of men. Suppose, by an extraordinary exertion of charity, it should be no longer possible that social misery should exist, is it not certain, that the greatest incentives to good conduct would disappear?

Lastly, I discovered that no advice, no education, no temporary relief is sufficient to shield a well-meaning and respectable individual amongst the poor, against the social despotism under which he suffers. The poor man, who

listens once a week to half-an-hour's good advice, relapses, on his visitor's departure, into the world by which he is surrounded. It is not necessary merely to tell him what to do, he must be enabled to do it; if he is to be a new man, he must have new allies, he must be placed in a position where, as he cannot stand alone, he may stand by the aid of others. He must know, that though living in a back slum, he has the support and counsel of friends who will, in his isolation, aid him. Here then I conclude the record of my failures. I had learnt that vague charity, distributed with the most minute inquiries, or bestowed on mere distress, or given without further aid to individuals, must inevitably end in disappointment. I have looked round for a more efficient scheme, and I have found it in the Christian Church.

A Christian may be sufficiently defined for the purpose, of philanthropy, as a man with a public character; wherever he may live, or however poor he may be, the duties of his religion compel him to appear frequently in public, and to be present at, or to take part in, the discussion of the affairs of the Christian com-

munity. He must, by virtue of his vocation, discharge his duty in the presence of his fellows, and of the officers of the Christian Church, whose special duty is the care of the social welfare of their people; needing no base investigation of local gossip, his general conduct reveals itself, year by year, in the care which he takes for the education of his children, and for his own moral improvement. If he hides himself from the eyes of his fellow men, his conduct admits of but one explanation. The hypocrisy which is so successful against the chance visitor is powerless against the opportunities of a Christian society, which can detect in his respect for what is good and reverent, in his sympathy with the efforts of Christian philanthropists, in his desire to learn his duty, in his use of the civilising influences of religious life, how far his care for himself and his family in prosperity, entitles him to the support of the Christian community in his misfortunes. The discipline of Christianity has, therefore, this singular advantage, that it forces its followers into public life, both to see and to be seen, to receive and to contribute benefit. Nor is this

all. It supplies a system of moral discipline, by the aid of which, a man may not only learn his duty, but be aided in its performance. The public assemblies, open alike to poor and rich—in which the duties and consolations of life are expounded — stimulate the consciousness of common interests, foster a sense of the dignity of man's destiny, and create by their discipline habits of propriety and serious thought. From the back slums of poverty the indigent and afflicted assemble at the house of God, to learn, and to perform their duty, and to be reminded that they are not without friends in the world, if they are true friends to themselves. They return to their homes with the promise of help, and with the assurance of sympathy. Christianity thus provides a mutual insurance on the principle, that in the name of Christ, the Church undertakes to support the distressed in their troubles, on condition that in their prosperity they conduct themselves honourably in the sight of their fellow Christians. The Church does not content itself with a mere promise, where its theory is honestly carried out; the poor man, who proves by his public conduct that

he is desirous of discharging his duty, is followed to his home by friendly visitors, of whose aid he may avail himself in his struggles. He is not dismissed to his native isolation with a shilling, or a meat ticket, and forthwith forgotten; new friends are found for him, new social ties are established, new alliances are created: the progress of beneficence is neither hindered nor imperilled by private inquiries, which every man of sense must feel to be degrading. Christian charity rests upon the intelligible test of public conduct which the Church has created. It is no argument against the unique value of Christianity as a regenerative power, that its virtues are rarely developed; this must always be the case where the clergy are placed over populations which exceed their power of control; or, where they are compelled from inadequacy of stipend to neglect their own proper work, and pursue the more profitable occupation of schoolmaster; or, where from sheer incompetence and want of statesmanship, they base their scheme of charity on bare attendance at church, or at the sacrament, without regard to the personal character which is

disclosed through these and the like acts of an upright life, and have neither the skill to establish, nor the perseverance to keep in working order, the subsidiary agencies, without which even Christianity must fall to the ground. No scheme is so good, or so grand, that it cannot be perverted and degraded by the narrow minds of incompetent officers and, the grander the scheme, the more likely is it to be degraded. My argument has reference solely to what the Christian scheme is, not to what the indolence and incompetence of mankind has reduced it. I find that Christianity (1.) forces a man into public life, so that it may be seen without degrading inquiry what manner of man he is; (2.) supplies him with a distinct and intelligible rule of public conduct, by the sincere observance of which he may be sure of the support of the Christian community; (3.) does not conflict with the fundamental laws of society, since it only relieves those who have observed, or are willing to observe the laws of religion and morality; (4. and lastly) assists the individual to escape from the base society and associations of his neighbourhood by the aid of

Christian friendship. The Christian scheme occupies a ground peculiarly its own; it leaves to the Poor Law and the relieving officer the task of dealing with the consequences of vice and improvidence, which are hardened against all power of reformation: it confines its charity to the sphere within which it can exercise a moral, educational, and regenerative influence; in such a scheme I find a solution for all the difficulties with which, in my early efforts at philanthropy, I was embarrassed. I now no longer wander up and down the streets in which poverty and distress have taken up their abode, with vague purpose and in helpless isolation. I recognise in the organisation of the Christian Church, the only efficient instrument of national regeneration. As I contemplate its infinite power of adaptation to every form of society, and every grade of life, its noble respect for personal dignity, its careful provision for the wants of corrupt humanity, its scientific demarcation from mere secular modes of relief, I am lost in humble admiration of the beneficence of the divine Saviour of society. I lay no claim on behalf of the Church, to the supernatural

energy which of right belongs to it; I regard it on its merits as a scheme for the redress, by human agency, of the evils of human life: I testify that I have found by experience, that it successfully encounters the difficulties with which no mere philanthropical contrivance can ever adequately grapple; but in what terms shall I describe the supineness which has allowed the machinery of the national Church to fall to pieces, the public indifference to the appointment of the clergy, upon whose activity, good sense, and piety, the efficiency of the whole system depends? In the midst of scenes of wretchedness, such as I have never before seen, I know that wisdom has justified herself against those who are not her children, and that Christ is avenged on his enemies. Will the world never learn that the Church of Christ is not a mere oratory, not a political engine, but an elaborate system, devised by its divine Founder for the regeneration of society, and the extinction of evil. In this very district, Christianity is strangely represented by the English Church; within its limits stand an episcopal chapel without pastoral charge, and the district church;

two independent societies are thus established by law, with a grand disregard of common sense, to work over the same ground. The episcopal chapel I may at once dismiss with the remark, that it is admirably conducted, that its schools are in good order, but that its sphere of usefulness is limited by its legal position. The district church is thinly attended, the windows of the schools have lost some of their frames, and most of their glass, the scholars are few, the school committee has not been convened within the last two years, and apparently has died a natural death.*

The Sunday school is, in consequence of feeble administration—if administration it can be called—in a deplorable state; the district visitors who, undismayed by unusual difficulties, pursue the work of Christian benevolence, act without co-operation, and apparently, never meet for counsel; charity is distributed without reference to any distinct or universal test of character. There may be apologies for the

* I am glad to say that from circumstances which need not here be detailed, the condition of the ecclesiastical system is temporarily improved.

existence of such a state of things; it may be that the difficulties of the parish are beyond the ability of any individual, or that the officers of the church are not the right men for these places, or that the bishop has no power to insist upon an efficient pastoral supervision of the parish; there are apologies for everything in this world. I must confess that no position in life is so disheartening as that of the poor incumbent of a large and demoralised district. Whatever may be the truth as regards the cause of parochial demoralisation, it is of little use to discuss it, I have attained my object if I have succeeded in drawing public attention to the fashion in which the Church of England exhibited the beneficence of Christ to ten thousand impoverished souls in the year 1867, while the bishop soared in the higher atmosphere of society, believing that he had sufficiently provided for their wants, by sending them a reliable friend, the brother of his governess. But for the activity of Dissenters, the name of Christ might have suffered greater degradation: opposed as I have been all my life to the principle of dissent, I must admit, that it has here accomplished, not

only a good work, but that the work has been done with as fair a recognition of the true theory of charity as is possible in their present circumstances. I make this admission with pleasure to those against whom, in a spirit of honourable competition, I have always contended.

Now let the reader consider what would have been the effect upon the masses of this country, if the conditions and the system of Christian charity had been conscientiously carried out in every parish for at least two generations, if the Church had confined its benevolence to those who gave public proof, either that they had done their duty in the past, or were willing to do it in the future, and had relegated to the overseer and the relieving officer the mendicants whose misconduct and resistance to all reformation were indisputable. Let him consider what would have been the effect upon the population of this district, if, during the twenty years of its existence, one steady system, and one continuous pressure had been applied, instead of the capricious and purposeless almsgiving which has been varied, modified, or altogether neglected

by one or other of the successive incumbents. Does he doubt that under such a *régime*, the national character would have been improved, the purpose and dignity of Christianity would be better appreciated, and that we should not now have to face, either here or elsewhere, the difficulty of regenerating a society thoroughly demoralised? The nation is waking up with a confused and anxious sense, not only of its sorrows, but of its perils; it is wearied and sick at heart of the projects of philanthropy, it is tired of building churches. Can I be surprised at this public apathy, when I regard the condition of the church in this district, the patronage of which, it is worth observing, is in the hands of the bishop (it is, indeed, just such a district church as the Bishop of London invites the public to build), surrounded by a demoralised crowd upon whom it exercises little influence? Nations, like individuals, must find their way back into the path of truth at the cost of much bitter experience and many blunders. The country is now, at the end of its experiments, ready to be saved in any way from the evils of pauperism and crime; it

can be saved only by the aid of the Christian Church.

But not by the Church in its present condition, nor by the aid of any amount of church building. 'Material resources never have supplied, nor ever can supply, the want of unity in design, and constancy in pursuit. But unity in design, and perseverance and boldness in pursuit, have never wanted resources, and never will.' * It is the living *personnel* capable of appreciating a great design and of persevering in the pursuit of it, and not the dead walls of colossal buildings, which is needed. What can the ntion expect from the efforts of a body of men, the value of whose labour is estimated at a hundred a year, and who, being naturally discontented with their position, have only half their heart in the work? Even if an abler staff of clergy could be attracted to the service of the Church, they could display neither vigour nor unity in their efforts under the embarrassments created by our present ecclesiastical law. Here, then, I find myself, by a different line of

* Burke, Letter on a Regicide Peace, ii.

argument, on the very ground which I occupied in the first part of this work. The Church is powerless against crime and pauperism without an able *personnel*, and the facilities of a more practicable legislation. Under the direction of inferior minds the scheme of Christian charity must assume the form in which it has in past time been presented to the nation; the indigent will be relieved because they practise a perfunctory attendance at church, or because they prefer church to chapel, or beeause they are communicants, or simply because they are in distress. The competition of religious sects, and the political necessities of the establishment offer a powerful inducement to convert christian alms to the purposes of religious partisans. To give, then, Christian benevolence its true direction, to support its efforts by subsidiary agencies, to maintain them in permanence and unity, requires absolutely, for its success, a very intelligent and persevering spirit in the chief officer of the system.

From the time when, after long experience, I had learnt the true value of the scheme of charity which is consecrated to the regenera-

tion of the world by Christ and his apostles, my one hope and prayer has been that I may contribute before I die to its restoration. I know the cost of promoting change. I might spare myself the bitterness of a severe contest by declining all responsibility for the evils which a disorganised establishment and the existence of corrupt interests within it are bringing upon the nation. I might leave those at whose door lies the sin of unconsciously corrupting the Church to the punishment which is now impending. If I sought vengeance for the evils which I deplore, I need but to stand aside and watch the rising tide * of national demoralisation, and the growth of a popular party which

* Three-and-twenty years ago, the country was occupied with the problem of finding work for industrious but unemployed able-bodied labourers. Workhouses were erected with wards for their occupation. The question was for the moment settled by the discovery of a new industry of enormous extent—the collection, working, and distribution of gold. The surplus-labour population of our generation was removed. The able-bodied wards—no longer of use—were converted into sick wards. But the value of this new industry, in Stock Exchange phrase, 'discounted.' The world is peopled up to the extent of its

will soon have the power, as it already has the wish, to remove the Church of England out of its place. Without encountering dangerous enmities I might quietly observe the infatuated quarrels of churchmen and the obstinate refusal of all concession by the party which has a corrupt interest in ecclesiastical abuses. I might amuse myself by tracing at ease in the last stage of the decline and fall of the National Establishment an analogy to the events which attended the siege and destruction of the capital of the Western Empire, when the besieged refused their wealth to the government and wasted the supreme hours of their fate on obscure theological controversies. Despising a neutral course, I have undertaken, with all its risks and vexations, the task of defining the evils which enfeeble the action of the Church of England and of manifesting the transcendent value of its inherent virtues. Whatever may be the result of my efforts, I shall complete my enterprise with the happy consciousness that I

industry, and we are now brought back to the problem which, at the beginning of this generation, weighed so heavily on the minds of statesmen and publicists.

have discharged my duty to my divine Master. To him in all humility I consecrate this attempt to restore the glory of his Church. May he be pleased to accept it!

CHAPTER III.

THE WAY OF PEACE.

The medium, the only medium for gaining men's affections and confidence is, that you will take off something oppressive to their mind.—BURKE.

THOUGH the parochial theory of the English Establishment provides but one church for each ecclesiastical district, there exist in many parishes additional and independent places of religious worship in which under episcopal license the Anglican service is performed by duly ordained ministers. These episcopal chapels are in many respects deserving of study. They have no district assigned to them in pastoral charge. They are oratories and lecture-rooms. Their ministers are appointed by trustees, proprietors, or the Crown, in such a way as to give the virtual patronage of the chapel to the congregation, for if the minister proves 'unacceptable' to his hearers, the chapel is rapidly deserted by those who pay the minister's salary. Indeed in many

cases these chapels were built for the express purpose of supplying a ministration of the congregation's choice. They correspond therefore in reality, if not in appearance, to the Free Kirks of Scotland. In the same spirit, where it has proved inconvenient or impossible to establish an episcopal chapel alongside the parish church, lecturers and readers have been appointed to supply the ministration which the incumbent and his curate failed to offer. Either through trustees where there is an endowment, or by the direct action of the subscribers where there is none, provision is made to secure a popular ministration. The essential difference between the lecturer and the incumbent is so well known and generally recognised, that the dissenter will attend the evening lecture who has refused all his life to hear the incumbent. Now these episcopal chapels, lecturers, and readers prove the existence of a considerable body of churchmen who, while remaining faithful to their communion, repudiate the form in which the Establishment presents the Church to the nation; who are ready to make heavy sacrifices rather than be driven to Dissent. Add to these

the vastly greater number who though desirous of maintaining their connection with the Church are unwilling or unable to establish or support new chapels or ministers, and maintain a discontented adherence to the Church service. With this calculation it is easy to understand why of the hundreds of thousands who are professed members of the Church of England so few display any great earnestness in its cause. The half-heartedness of churchmen as a body which is thus in a great measure explainable by the fact that of those who attend the Church a large number attend it under a silent protest, is fully elucidated when we take into account the popular belief that the wealth of the Church is unjustly and wastefully distributed; that its laws seem incapable of preventing or remedying known grievances and that its government is pronounced feeble and vacillating. With a professed allegiance to the doctrine and discipline of the Church is combined in a considerable section of English churchmen, a decided reluctance to support it in its established form, which displays itself not in violent opposition or open hostility, but in a steady and persistent

indifference to such matters as church-building and augmentations of clerical stipend. If we pass beyond the pale of the Church into the regions of Dissent we encounter a correlative opposition of sentiment amongst the greatest and most respectable body of nonconformists. The Wesleyan methodists protest that though they worship apart, they have not and do not intend to separate themselves from the communion of the Church. They cherish, as their founder John Wesley did before them, their connection with it. They point with just pride to the circumstance that the Methodist revival was commenced within the Church by its ordained ministers, that it was a Church-movement, that they have erected chapels because the Church will not or cannot supply them with the needful Christian ministration. They proclaim themselves dissenters under protest and would be churchmen on conditions. Now it deserves to be carefully noticed that neither of these protests is directed against the doctrine of the Church but against the want of spiritual life and adequate ministration within the Establishment. No mere theological concession can therefore

restore hearty co-operation to churchmen or bring back Wesleyans to the bosom of the Church. There is no use therefore in redressing grievances which are not the subject of complaint. To attempt comprehension by what Bishop Ellicott tersely calls 'the trimming of creeds,' is the vain dream of unpractical men. A churchman's first duty is to understand the protests under which many churchmen and all Wesleyans hold a bare communion with the Church.

It is encouraging to note the reluctance with which dissenters withdrew from the Church of their fathers. The most affecting chapter in the history of nonconformity is that which narrates Wesley's efforts to retain communion with a clergy which had lost sight of spiritual truth and ceased as a body to practise a spiritual life. In vain he attempted to instruct them in his work. He was refused communion by the drunken priest of his native parish. He declares with truth that he was driven from the community of which he was an ordained minister. He was forced into dissent, not on account of his theological views about the exact nature of

which few troubled themselves, but because he proclaimed the necessity of distinctive Christian teaching, a spiritual life and a moral discipline. Such were the circumstances under which the separation began. But why, it may be asked, did the recalcitrant churchmen and such men as Wesley shrink from the obvious duty of reforming a corrupt system and prefer the establishment of a new one? For very simple reasons. In the eighteenth century by the laxity of ecclesiastical laws and of the penal laws against dissent, churchmen could establish when they pleased episcopal chapels and lectureships, and dissenters could build chapels and follow unmolested their own discipline to their heart's content. No man could hinder them from the enjoyment of their new religious liberty if they were willing to pay for it. At the same time from the constitution of our electoral system it was impossible to attempt the reform of ecclesiastical abuses supported as they were by a powerful party in parliament. Of the crowds who listened to the preaching of Wesley probably not one in a thousand had a vote. Of the disposition of parliament to meet the wishes of

reformers we may form a conception from the records of its action during the last hundred years. Putting aside the Commutation of Tithes Act (which was the work of landowners) the Ecclesiastical Commission and the abolition of pluralities (mere acts of vengeance on the dignified clergy for their Tory sympathies), it is difficult to find a single measure of ecclesiastical reform in regard to the selection of clergy, the distribution of patronage, the transfer of benefices or (with the exception of a futile Church Discipline Act) for the better government of the Church. The ecclesiastical courts are an antiquarian curiosity, so little have they been affected by the changes and influences of two hundred years. While the rights of property in the Church have been jealously guarded, the efficient discharge of its spiritual functions has been the subject of no legislative remedy.

It is now no longer a luxury for which dissenters should be grateful to the government that they can enjoy the ministration of their own choice if they will only pay for it. Dissenters are asking loudly why they should be compelled to pay for spiritual care while a

wealthy corporation exists in this country for supplying religious services gratis, and have for some years been seeking a weak point or creating a practicable opening in the intrenchments by which the wealth of the Church is secured. They have succeeded beyond their wishes in carrying a reform bill which materially alters both the power of the Church to protect and the power of the dissenters to assail the Establishment. It is calculated that there are about 125 members of the present House of Commons who owe their seats to the influence of the great families and whose votes have always been cast, except in times of great and dangerous popular excitement, against innovations in the Church or concession to its enemies. A considerable portion of this small but powerful section of the House will disappear under the new reform bill. A still more important change has been effected by the lowering of the franchise. For the first time the poorer members of the community, to whom religion is as the bread of life, whose chapel represents their most vital public interests, will be able to give effect to their wishes by their suffrages.

The bill confers the power of voting precisely on that section of society in which dissent finds its most congenial home, nor is it to be expected that the small shopkeeper or respectable artisan who would not sacrifice an hour's profit to settle the Eastern question or to decide the policy of the Colonial Office, will be indifferent to the interests of his chapel or feel any sympathy for the dignified clergy, whom he rarely sees. A workman himself he is not likely to approve of the present arrangement by which the clergy who do little work have large salaries, while those who have small salaries work laboriously. The religious sympathies of the working classes will exercise even more than their just influence on the policy of the government. The constituencies will be enlarged beyond the possibility of a candidate's personal canvass. The value of a popular cry will be enormously enhanced. As it will be impossible to bring voters to the poll by the personal solicitation of the candidate, it will be necessary to appeal to some popular passion sufficiently strong to induce the elector to record his unasked or to induce another elector to ask him. To the majority of the

working classes what cry will appeal so powerfully as a religious cry? For what cause is he so likely to sacrifice his time and his money as for his religion? It may then be safely assumed that the next parliament will be not only animated by strong religious sympathies, but that its disposition will be adverse to the present established system of the Church. Nor are there wanting active leaders to utilise for the purpose of their followers this new political energy. There are now three distinct schools of church reformers all converging to one common point. The philosophical reformers dispute the value of all ecclesiastical establishments not only as an incumbrance to the nation but as detrimental to the purity and integrity of the Church itself. They quote the present condition of the national establishment as the most convincing proof of the truth of their assertions. The strength of this school lies in its intimate alliance with the politics of a powerful section of the Liberal party. The political reformers denounce the Church as an obnoxious Tory organisation, which in every period of its history has opposed the progress of

the people and the cause of liberty, and adopt the tactics by which in every age wealthy and antiquated corporations have been successfully assaulted. Lastly, within the limits of the Church itself a small but rapidly increasing body of Free Churchmen is forming itself into a school whose principle is the release of the church at all hazards from the thraldom of the State. Thus with simultaneous vigour though without co-operation, these enterprising assailants are pressing the assault of the establishment of the English Church which will soon have to defend its revenues in a popular assembly animated by no friendly feelings. Can anyone doubt the result of the conflict if the Establishment risks a battle in its present condition?

Suppose now even in these last hours the authorities of the Church boldly undertook the reform of its finances, the re-organisation of its service, and the reformation of its laws, how would the position of affairs be altered? It is difficult to predict the results of reforms effected at the last moment and under the presence of great danger. Still without being sanguine, a churchman who believes in the inherent strength and

power of the Church of Christ might fairly anticipate that popular support and honour would return to the Church when the evils which alienated the affections of so many of its members were redressed. Half-hearted churchmen would forego their protest and offer an active support in return for generous concession. Dissenters who attend chapel under protest would no longer be able to plead the evils of an Establishment for their justification. If they left the Church with so much reluctance, may it not be fairly assumed that a large majority would return to the communion which was ready to do them justice? The increased efficiency of the Church after its reform would be the best answer to those who deny its power. The faculties resulting from a reformed code would reconcile to the establishment the ardent spirits who are galled by the restraints of a mediæval legislation. It is possible, then, materially to strengthen the position of the Church and to disarm its opponents of their most dangerous weapons. But this is not the whole case. It is becoming sufficiently clear to the leaders of dissent that if the nation is prepared to displace

the Church it is not likely to promote dissent to the vacancy, that the Church may be disendowed of its revenue but cannot be deprived of its prestige, its literature, and its local associations, and that dissenting bodies will derive little advantage from a change which restores to the Church its ancient glory as the poor and faithful spouse of Christ. In the competition of free sects which would ensue upon the disestablishment of the Church, it would soon be discovered by dissenting leaders that the Church would commence the race without the weight with which the State connection has burdened it. From these considerations I conclude that if Church reform were honestly undertaken the assault upon the revenues of the Church would be ill directed, opposed with vigour and feebly supported. I cannot hesitate to believe as I trace in the past the reluctance of churchmen to be driven into dissent, the sacrifices they were willing to undergo to preserve their connection with the Church, the strong love of such men as Wesley to the society which he could not reform, that the semi-dissent of churchmen would be replaced by a hearty loyalty

and that a considerable portion of Nonconformists would return to the communion of the Church if justice were done to their real grievances, and a fair hearing granted to the grievances which are not real.

A Reflection from Burke.

'If there is any one eminent criterion which above all the rest distinguishes a wise government from an administration weak and improvident, it is this—"well to know the best time and manner of yielding what it is impossible to keep." There have been, and there are, many who choose to chicane with their situation rather than be instructed by it.'

CHAPTER IV.

SAMARITANS.

No man well of such a salve can speak
That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace.
SHAKSPEARE.

COME with me, gentle reader, and let us visit the abodes of ecclesiastical charity. Let us approach the head-quarters of the benevolent societies which advertise the wants of the clergy in the newspapers, and contemplate charity at home. Let us walk down Fleet Street, as Dr. Johnson loved to do, and, entering Falcon Court, view the dwelling in which the Church Pastoral Aid Society pursues its labours. Let us then pass on through the Strand to Whitehall, and pause for a moment before the building on which is displayed the ensign of the sister society—the Additional Curates' Aid. These societies have one common object, the payment of the stipend of curates in cases where the incumbent cannot pay

it himself. They are both of them Incumbents' Aid Societies. They pay wholly or in part the stipends of curates at the market price. Their action does not, therefore, tend to raise the value of a curate's labour; it rather depresses it by multiplying the number of curates. They differ in one respect only, that the Pastoral Aid contributes to the salaries of evangelical curates, while the Additional Curates' Aid makes its grants without reference to the theological views of the recipients.

Let us now retrace our steps, and passing round the corner of the National Gallery survey a door studded with brass plates, amongst which is one bearing the legend of the Friend of the Clergy Corporation. The object of this society is the relief of the clergy, with their widows and orphans, who having sacrificed all to God, and having led a moral life, are in beggary and sorrow. Proceeding up St. Martin's Lane we reach the dreary portal of the Clergy Mutual Aid Society, which extends help, in the shape of annuities, to the poor clergy who can subscribe three pounds a year. These subscriptions, supplemented by donations, form

a fund from which the annuities are paid. There is a sort of grim humour about this society, since, as the annual payment of three pounds is a moral impossibility to clergy who, with a hundred a year, see a fortune in sixpence, it affords no relief to the very persons who most need it. Striking across into Southampton Street, let us finish our travels with a view of the offices of the Poor Clergy Relief Society, which collects old clothes and distributes small alms to the necessitous clergy who are on the verge of beggary. Of the multitudinous little charities for the clergy, a list of which has been published by Messrs. Rivington, and is dismally recommended (*proh pudor*!) to the clergy in the London Diocese book, we need say nothing at present. Honour, gentle reader, the exhibition of so much benevolence, without forgetting the frightful extent of misery of which these societies are an indication. For my part, as I contemplate the multiplicity of this charity, I am reminded of Martial's epigram to his friend Umber, who had sent him, on the shoulders of eight Syrian slaves, a miscellaneous collection of napkins, toothpicks, beans, osiers, and figs.

'You might have sent me with less trouble five pounds of silver,' said the satirist. I cannot help thinking that a more generous relief could and should be administered with less machinery.

I have often seen Charity dwelling next door to injustice, occupied with the perpetual task of redressing the wrongs of her evil neighbour. Even there have I honoured her, when I was satisfied that the cause of these evils was irremoveable. But I can no longer regard her as a virtue where she is content to diminish the sorrows which, by effort and perseverance, she might remove altogether; and where, while palliating by temporary relief the evils which she does not remove, she diminishes the force of the reasons which would have induced others to extirpate them, I refuse her all respect. I have seen Charity thus sitting under the shadow of the Church, pacifying by partial relief the cries of the unhappy victims of injustice, and hiding the extent of their sorrows from the eyes of the world. I know that if for one year she ceased her incessant labour, and pious and honourable clergymen stood before the public without clothes and food, and parishes without

adequate clergy, the nation would indignantly demand the redress of their grievances. Shall I then honour charity by which these very grievances are perpetuated?

These societies extend aid to clergymen of honest and pious lives *only*. Imagine, gentle reader, an Oxford M.A. preaching a sermon on the blessings of poverty in another man's old trousers,* with his children clad in cast-off clothes before him. With what bitterness he must reflect that he is thus degraded, not because he is lazy, immoral, or incompetent, but because in running the race of life he has never had the chance of running it fairly. He was, in truth, beaten before he started, though pious frauds were employed to conceal the truth, and to keep up the illusion that some sort of race was going on, lest he should not start at all. Imagine a curate who lives all his life on alms—for the payments of the societies are but transferred alms—and dying as 'a godly minister' in an almshouse. I have seen both these spectacles. Is this then, in a Christian country, the reward

* The phrase is classical. 'Braccæ veteres Britonis pauperis,' says Martial.

of a pious life, that it qualifies a clergyman, who has spent his energies in the service of the Church, for old clothes and an almshouse ?

How curiously characteristic are these societies of the country in which they have found a congenial home. England, with its true commercial instinct, has the honour of having organised charity as she would a manufacture, and contrives to extract, in the process of collecting alms, collateral benefits for the collectors. Clerical genius has discovered that these societies may be used as ladders against the wall upon which the ripe fruit of preferment hangs so temptingly, and that the post of organising secretary is not only well paid, but is a sphere in which clerical talents may be profitably displayed with a chance of preferment. Whatever, therefore, may be their effect upon the clergy for whom they importune the public, they are eminently advantageous to the interests of their own staff.

Let us now, gentle reader, wend our way homewards. You are saddened by your experiences : well, so am I. Is there not a world of truth in the saying that the world would not

want so much charity if it had more justice? You are thinking, what would become of a considerable section of the clergy if, through national disaster, public charity were contracted: what would be the fate of the aged godly ministers, the disbanded curates, their wives, children, and orphans? What if the Christmas box of old clothes did not turn up at the appointed date? Well, I am thinking gloomily of that too. But my mind is at this moment preoccupied by the embarrassing question, how is it that in the Church of this commercial country the minister, out of the long list of public servants, should alone be deemed unworthy of his hire, that he should be dependent upon the charitable efforts of societies and friends for his support, that he should be treated as an almsman, and not as a workman? Will the nation never learn that it cannot be served faithfully and well by a staff of servants whom it treats with exceptional injustice and indifference? Is the Church of England of so little value that the nation is prepared to let it settle down into the deep under the weight of its inherent troubles? My mind is oppressed

with the reflection. It is a dark hour. Let us follow the example of the patriotic poet of the French in like circumstances:

Devenons insensibles
Pour conserver notre gaieté.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE INGENUITY OF CRIPPLES.

The art of our necessities is strange.—SHAKSPEARE.

IT is interesting to observe the ingenuity with which a cripple supplies by new contrivances the want of an arm or a leg. A man without a hand will often write better with his toes than many men can with their fingers. But as the spectacle is not so pleasant as it is interesting, the observer is not likely to discover in such exhibitions an argument against the value of legs or arms. The beauty and worth of direct and natural action is none the less striking after comparison with such ingenious methods of compensating natural deficiencies. Now, if I admit that the Church of England in its crippled condition does contrive to accomplish by indirect action many important results, I cannot accept this fact as an argument against the value of a

reform which would restore strength, freedom, and power to its system. Its beneficence in spite of mutilation and embarrassment should rather encourage Churchmen to the task of redressing its grievances; especially when they calculate at what a cost of dignity, peace, sincerity, and Christian good feeling the present indirect government is conducted. In order that the reader may comprehend the full value of this argument, I set down here the narrative of scenes illustrative of the present ecclesiastical government which have come under my own observation.

Scene I.

A certain bishop is in dismay. He has just heard that a clergyman of very unpopular views is about to effect a lodgment in his diocese by the aid of a lady who is ready to build him a church. He has no power by law to prevent it. He knows the value of popular opinion, and cannot afford to brave it by admitting the intruder. In this dilemma he appeals privately to the incumbent out of whose parish the new district has been carved, to refuse the nomination, but

not to let the bishop's name appear in the matter. An unfortunate incident compels the incumbent to declare the grounds of his opposition, and the bishop, an able and well-meaning man, withdraws discomfited from a position into which the necessities of his office had forced him.

Scene II.

The rays of a midday sun are falling upon a dilapidated rectory. The garden, with its weather-stained sun-dial in the middle, is a wilderness of rank herbs and fruitless currant trees. Every cottager in the adjoining hamlet knows that the rector is in a bad way, if they know no more of him. The garden gate opens under the hand of no less a person than the archdeacon, who walks forward with a grand sense of dignity comely to behold. He is come to remonstrate with his erring brother. He knocks once and again with an air of irritation. At last the head of the rector appears through a window in the upper story with the demand, 'Who are you?' 'I am Archdeacon:—' 'Are you,

indeed? I thought you were. Good morning.' The window closes. The archdeacon, with ruffled feathers, withdraws.

Scene III.

We are now in a manufacturing district Forty years ago the town which now spreads itself, with huge factories and long rows of workmen's cottages, over six square miles, had no existence. The Church has scrambled after the population as it best could. That church on the hill was built out of the million sterling which easy Lord Melbourne contributed from the public exchequer, and is known by the name of the 'million church.' There are other churches built under various Acts: in the middle of the town the parish church raises its dull brick tower.

The law has not defined the relations of the district incumbents to the vicar, and they are now taking counsel's opinion about the propriety of commencing legal proceedings against him. The vicar regards the question as one of dignity: he has no wish (it would diminish his chances

of preferment) to be confounded with the herd of small incumbents. He surrounds himself with a staff of curates by the aid of a London society, whose favour he propitiates by a proceeding which awakens the wrath of the district incumbents. They complain that he forwards to the society funds which were raised in their churches, in return for which he receives grants for his curates, and will allow him to preach no more in their districts. So stands the question at the present hour. Amidst such mean contests is the work of Christ carried on amongst that teeming population!

Scene IV.

The anti-Colenso agitation is in full swing. Churchmen have learnt that the bishops have no direct power to exclude Colensoists from the Church. The exclusion is therefore undertaken indirectly. A curate is sitting in a small room in a small cottage of a poor parish of which he has just taken the charge. It is rumoured that his name is not in the list of those who protested against Colenso. The rural dean takes alarm,

and writes a private communication to the rector. Now is the curate sped, if the rector takes fright. Happily the rector is a gentleman, and takes little notice of the message: and the curate learns only at a later period that his character and his bread had been well nigh taken from him by a false and secret accusation.

Scene V.

Through a parlour window an anxious clerical face is looking ruefully on his household goods as they are being transferred, with many a rough knock, from the parsonage to the carrier's waggon. Three times within *one* year has the reverend gentleman (it is no less than Mr. G——m, since well known in religious controversy) looked upon the same spectacle. His first curacy was suddenly terminated by the death of the incumbent, and in six weeks he had to evacuate the parsonage, with his family and goods. His next curacy was in a sequestrated parish. Hardly had he settled there before the rector's friends subscribed enough money to remove the sequestration. The curacy he is now leaving has

been terminated by the bishop, who, believing the rector's plea of ill-health on the ground of which he obtained leave of absence to be fictitious, has insisted on the rector's return. Can you wonder that anxiety and weariness is impressed on the face of that curate who three times in one year has been sent adrift?

Scene VI.

We are sitting beneath a platform on which the Bishop of Ely is speaking. We have come to hear the polished churchmanship of Mr. Hope and the stubborn logic of Archdeacon Denison. Says the bishop, 'People do not sufficiently remember that in no calling can a man succeed who has not capital. My brother in the colonies once said to me, "Do not send out any young man from England unless he has hard hands, a hard head, or hard cash." People do not sufficiently reflect how, in order to succeed even in our own holy calling, a man must possess similar gifts.' That is to say, that a rich clergyman is preferred before a poor one in a Church whose God filleth the hungry with good things and sendeth the

rich empty away. Was ever such an odious admission made without a cry of shame in a Christian assembly? Surely the glory is departed from the house of God. Yet there is a truth in the bishop's words. A rich clergyman can always buy preferment, or subscribe on condition of being himself preferred to the building of a new church. It is in this way that he has advantage over his poorer brother. But why did not the bishop say so plainly?

Scene VII.

The Rev. John H—— is holding converse with a clerk in the office of the Registrar of a southern diocese. Let us listen to the conversation. H.: 'I find you have elected a proctor.' Clerk: 'Yes, sir.' H.: 'But you never sent out voting papers.' Clerk: 'No, sir.' H.: 'Then the election is illegal.' Clerk: 'I can't help that, sir.' H.: 'But why did you not send them?' Clerk: 'Well, sir, the clergy never paid me for the last lot I sent out, and they cannot expect me to do my work for nothing. I shan't send out any more till I am paid.' H. (astounded): 'I never heard

such a thing. I shall speak to Archdeacon S——.' Clerk: 'Very good, sir.' The Rev. John H. informed me that on calling upon the archdeacon he was told that the clerk had correctly described the facts; and, said the archdeacon *more ecclesiastico*, 'I have no power to interfere in the matter.' Had he been a bishop, he could not have announced his decision with a more practised suavity.

Scene VIII.

We are now in a remote country parish nine miles from a railway station. The antiquated incumbent is in close conference with a neighbouring clergyman who has announced himself as the newly appointed rural dean. 'You see,' says the visitor, 'the bishop desires to exercise a more efficient supervision of his diocese, and he has appointed rural deans, of whom I am one. An archdeacon is *oculus episcopi*, and the rural dean is therefore *oculus archidiaconi*.' 'I understand,' says the incumbent, 'it is all my eye together;' and with this speech the interview terminated.

By the aid of such contrivances, and at the cost of so much of its dignity and authority, the government of the Church of England has been carried on under the political dispensation which is now passing away. If the Church has not done its work as it ought, it has done its work better then could be expected from its crippled condition. So much must at least be in justice conceded. But in the presence of great social disturbance, and in the face of that 'earnest *régime*,' as Mr. Gladstone has described it, which is now commencing, something more will be demanded of a great and wealthy Establishment than that it should prevent its own dissolution by the aid of makeshifts. The temper of the public mind and the necessities of society unite in demanding not only that it should do its work, but that the work shall be well done. It may be said that the reform necessary for the restoration of the Church is impossible. I will admit the truth of this assertion when I learn that any party or any person in authority within the Church has attempted the task with resolution, and been unsuccessful. I have vainly endeavoured to recall to my memory a single

effort, in the history of the last hundred years, to reform the Church by the redress of grievances of which complaint has been widely and publicly expressed. Till therefore the task is honestly undertaken and unmistakeably fails, I shall content myself with replying, to all arguments about the difficulties of reform, that to the present hour reform has never been attempted.

In conclusion, let me set before the reader a synopsis of the arguments which have been adduced in favour of the scheme of reform advocated in this work.—

I have proved—

(I) That private patrons* have succeeded in acquiring for all patrons the power of presenting a clerical nominee to a benefice without regard to his special qualifications or to the wants of the parish.

(II) That in consequence of an impracticable ecclesiastical law, and with the aid of a powerful

* I wish to record my conviction that private patronage, under just restrictions, is of infinite value to the Church.

party in Parliament, the bishops are deprived of all real control over the nominees of other patrons, and even over their own; so that a patron may now sell a presentation as though it were an annuity for life, contingent on the fulfilment of a few easy conditions.

(III) That the bishops, having lost the power of control, are compelled to govern by popularity, to employ their patronage to reward subservience or to secure support, and to fill important posts with reliable friends—the question of special fitness for duty or of claims for long service being necessarily disregarded.

(IV) That caprice in the distribution of preferment, the grievances of curates, the degradation of clerical charity, the eccentricities of public worship, are the natural fruits of our present perverted ecclesiastical polity.

The remedy lies in Parliament alone. The power of patrons is established, and can only be abated, by act of Parliament. The reform of ecclesiastical law can be effected only in Parliament, inasmuch as it affects the rights of property. As every improvement in the position of curates must be at the expense of the rights of incum-

bents and patrons secured by Parliament, the relief of the unbeneficed clergy is impossible till Parliament consents to revise those rights. The friends of the Church who advocate reform would do well to remember that the establishment of a new claim means an abatement of an old one, and that no progress can be made in Church reform till Parliament is contented to abate, in the first instance, the extravagant claims of private patrons, and to revise the laws by which the private rights in the Church are defined and upheld. There may be danger in trusting ecclesiastical revenues to the consideration of Parliament. There is greater danger in allowing the difficulties of the Establishment to assume such proportions that Parliament will be compelled to interfere at the instance of its enemies. It is no longer a question whether the private rights in the Church should be submitted to Parliament, or whether Parliament should be excluded. That question has long since been decided. Parliament will interfere either at the instance of friends or enemies. In the present state of affairs it seems the wiser policy to invite a friendly intervention than to provoke a hostile demonstration.

CHAPTER VI.

PIOUS FALLACIES.

I.

That competition is always beneficial.

WOULD the nation be better served by three post offices, or is London benefited by its multitude of gas and water companies? What lesson has the experience of the last twenty years in the value of public service taught us so clearly as that, where central government is possible, competition is wasteful, untrustworthy, and irregular. It is true that, where no central authority can be established, competition, for want of a better stimulus of human activity, must be established. Let us estimate its value in tracing its history. There is first the healthy contest for the production of the best article at the cheapest cost, till the progress of improvement is arrested by accumulated difficulties. This is the golden age of competition. Then

commences a competition of deception, in which the worse often triumphs over the better. It is easier to dispose of an article by false statements as to its excellence and by extrinsic advantages, than to create in it additional merits. The ultimate tendency of competition is, then, towards the development of the stratagems of pushing traders. Whether religious rivalry is in the first, or has reached the second stage of competition, I leave the reader to decide. Whatever may be his decision, it is plain that the competition of religious sects is carried on at the cost of concentrating public interest on points of disagreement, promoting permanent antagonism, and encouraging inferior organisations to a temporary and sometimes successful opposition to a rival system of greater excellence.

II.

That a friend of the Church of England is necessarily a friend of the Church of Christ.

An English Churchman may befriend the national Church for the sake of the corruptions

by which he profits. A patron who desires to nominate an unworthy relative to a benefice is naturally a staunch Churchman for the very reason which drives other Churchmen into dissent. A Tory is a friend of the Church as long as the Church is true blue: does he see the same dignity in it when it is yellow? As there are many who are enemies to the Church because of its virtues, so there are many who are its friends because of its corruptions. When the profitable abuses are swept away, the Church of Christ will lose the support of a considerable body whose allegiance has been so frequently vaunted.

III.

That the Church is in danger.

The Church of Christ, being founded on the divine word, is never in danger. The salaries of the great Churchmen and the political system of the Church is indeed imperilled. But the Church of Christ and its political system are not convertible terms. This confusion of ideas is employed for the purpose of

misleading popular opinion and throwing the sanctity of religion over a vicious political system. The pure and holy doctrine of Christ, with its spiritual organisation, is clearly separable from any worldly system of raising and distributing money to support it.

IV.

That a clergyman of the Church of England has the privilege of preaching the Gospel.

If he is an incumbent, he may preach the Gospel within his own parish, but, except by permission, not beyond it. If he is a curate—one in three of the whole clerical body—he cannot, except by permission of an incumbent. All England is divided into parishes, in which the incumbent reigns supreme. If the curate is a marked man and unpopular with incumbents, he must perforce be silent altogether. He has no place to exercise his ministry. Within the limits of his parish he must preach not only the Gospel of Christ, but the Gospel of the incumbent. It follows, then, that a clergyman is a servant of a close guild who, having sacrificed a

portion of his liberty in accepting holy orders, must preach the Gospel under a particular political arrangement which confines his efforts either to a special sphere or silences him altogether.

'Wenn man,' says Goethe, 'von den Leuten Pflichten fordert und ihnen keine Rechte zugestehen will, muss man sie gut bezahlen.'

V.

That a clergyman can leave the Church if he does not like it.

A clergyman of the English Church abjures the world with a solemn oath at his ordination. The canons forbid his return to secular occupations. The churchwardens are enjoined to report him if found in the prosecution of trade. He has the law therefore against him, and will be regarded, if he reverts to secular life, as acting in defiance of it. Harder than the law is popular opinion, which condemns the clergyman who deserts his cause for secular profits. If he leaves the Church, therefore, he leaves his character behind him. Hardest of all is the

effect of clerical life upon a man's business habits. A clergyman, after many years of spiritual life, is unfit for the prosecution of trade. His tone of mind is averse from the necessary sharp practice which, in these days of competition, is essential to success in business. He has not only much to learn, but much to unlearn, so much indeed that he is on the brink of the grave before he is fairly at work. In consideration, then, of the obstacles created by law, public opinion, and his own clerical character, a clergyman feels that his life is for ever bound up with the Church, and that in good and ill fortune he must abide by it to the end.

VI.

That a clergyman, like a barrister, solicitor, or doctor, takes his chance in his profession.

The clerical profession is a close one: the others are open. A clergyman cannot establish a business wherever he finds an opening. He must have a license to practise under another of his profession. He may be silenced at any moment.

One half of the rewards of his calling is private property. His profession is a close field and nearly all favour, instead of being a fair field and no favour. When the clergy have the privileges of the doctor or solicitor to exercise their ministry without let or hindrance, it will be a fair course to leave the unsuccessful to their fate and to condemn to a bare allowance those who, having made trial of their abilities, are found wanting.

VII.

That the minister of an Established Church is a missionary, and should be content with the honour of being an apostle.

He is no more a missionary than the gentleman who drives his mail-phaeton in the park is an engine-driver on the North-Western Railway. The one drives when he pleases: the other follows a tedious track at the command of his masters. This fallacy pervades the speeches of religious orators, who cry out for more clergy without being able to offer adequate remuneration. A convenient obliquity of mental vision

does not allow them to observe that a clergyman of the Established Church is bound by an obligation to preach or cease to preach as it suits the interests of a political system.

It is impossible to conceive a position more unlike that of an apostle than the minister of an Establishment. The missionary goes out to heathen lands, hearing the call of God in his soul, controlled and supported by God alone. The Established minister cannot open his mouth except under severe restrictions. The one serves God alone, the other serves God under secular conditions.

While, for the sake of getting cheap curates, Church dignitaries are wont to invest them with the honourable character of apostolic agents, the Missionary Societies have been compelled to degrade the character of the missionary to the level of a paid agent of a secular system. They cannot help themselves. They cannot afford to leave their agents in foreign parts to follow unreservedly the call of conscience, or to assure them maintenance in old age and support in their mission without an equivalent. They have to consult the feelings of subscribers. They must

receive by each mail a full report of conversions and baptisms, to be placed before the supporters of the several societies. The missionary is thus reduced to the level of a paid agent of a London firm. I am not surprised that missionaries—worthy men as they all are—do not develope in their work the sublime qualities essential to success, and that missionary work is regarded with discouragement which the noble exertions of certain missionaries whose names are written in the Book of Life have not sufficed to dispel. There is a weariness in the public mind, in regard to this subject, which it behoves us to note. Colonists, on their return to their native country, depreciate missionary labours; and the religious world in England, shocked at this disagreement between the reports of independent witnesses and those of the societies, is withdrawing its subscriptions without suspecting the origin of that evil in the reality of which they are beginning to believe.

To speak of the minister of an Established Church as a missionary is a mistake: to deal with him, in the matter of remuneration, as an apostle is an injustice. On the other hand, the

missionary who is reduced to the level of a paid agent of a board of directors loses his chief motive to self-sacrifice, is a servant of men, and not an apostle of God. His call bears no longer the character of an engagement between God and his own soul: it assumes the air of a commercial contract, of so much sacrifice for so much money, between himself and his employers.

VIII.

That the clergy ought not to regard pay.

How wicked, then, must be the conduct of archbishops, bishops, deans, and wealthy rectors who receive large incomes varying from 15,000*l.* to 1,000*l.* a year, while poor incumbents and curates are held to be sufficiently paid with an annual income of 150*l.* Might not these dignitaries subsist honourably on smaller stipends, and bestow the surplus on distressed clergymen, their widows and orphans? If the statement is true as against the poor, it is true as against the rich clergy. If it is wrong to ask for a higher salary when you DO want it, it is wrong to keep a large salary, to the detriment of others, when you do *not* want it.

Suppose a clergyman has a wife and children: is it not his duty to provide for them? He may sacrifice himself: has he a right to sacrifice his family for his profession? Suppose he is unmarried, will he not be all the more efficient when unembarrassed by the necessity of procuring his daily bread by temporary expedients. At what point money becomes an impediment to a clergyman is quite a different question. He ought perhaps to be as indifferent to the salary of a bishop as he is anxious for the average pay of an incumbent.

'Ordinary service,' says Burke, 'must be secured by the motives to ordinary integrity. I do not hesitate to say, that state which lays its foundation on rare and heroic virtues will be sure to have its superstructure in the basest profligacy and corruption.'

L'ENVOI.

GENTLE reader, there is a sadness in being alone. Solitude brings with its peaceful silence its own sorrow. To stand aloft like another pillar saint preaching to the listless and unsympathising crowd below, protesting against the cant of the scribe and Pharisee, and the vices of the publican and sinner, calling the world to make sacrifice of its pleasure and a plea sure of its duty—this is the heavy penalty which all must pay who, in discharging a solemn mission, must discharge it alone. Vain is the dream of the speculative reformer that virtue may be promoted without exacting the hostility of vice, and that freedom may be restored without demanding sacrifice from the oppressor. As I stand here apart from the perplexed rush of human energy, calculating its direction and its fate, meting out praise and censure, I feel how deep is the solitude to which I have

consigned myself. It is perhaps best that it should be so. I see the work before me so much the plainer. I am the better able to complete the task of which the final instalment is now laid before the public.

It is time that Christianity should be to the present world what it has been to the past. It has created the most perfect type of character which the world has seen. The self-denial, gentleness, personal purity, and moral courage which in the middle ages distinguished the knight, and in modern times are the characteristics of the gentleman, form the group of virtues which have been enforced by Christian teaching and honoured through Christian authority. Nor is society under less obligation than individuals to the operation of Christian spirit. Modern society under the teaching of Christ has consecrated into articles of faith the equality of all men before the law, the obligations of benevolence, and the rights of liberty. In the name of Christian principle it has achieved its noblest triumphs. It has freed the slave, heals the sick, and cares for the poor. Modern

society, and our ideal of character, are alike the expressions of Christianity.

How is it, then, that the Church of England no longer exercises the full influence of Christianity, either on personal character or society? The national character bears evidence rather of dissenting and puritan influence. Its religious earnestness savours of the chapel rather than of the Church. Of the triumphs of society in its contests with human misery and corruption can the Church of England (alas that I should say so) claim one single instance for its own honour? The principles of Christ have been carried out by those who were not his official servants. How has this happened? Because the Church of Christ, as represented in the national Establishment, has neither been fairly treated, efficiently appointed, nor wisely governed.

In the name of that divine Master whose Church was established for the purification of human character and the removal of social misery I ask, gentle reader, your sympathy and cooperation as far as your power extends. I do not disguise the difficulties of the work of

reformation, nor the vexations which all reformers in a world such as ours must encounter. Let the honour of the work compensate for its sorrows. Let us say with the apostles 'It is well for us to be here,' if by our efforts we are permitted to see the Church of Christ transfigured before our face, its powerlessness and humiliation changed into a glory beyond that of its ancient days, its organisation completed, its administration reformed, and its beneficence universal.

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